

## New Book Review

*Reclaiming the Commons: Challenging an Enlightened Church to Act*, a work in progress, is now available in digital format through Brassica Books, or free on our website <earthhealing.info>. The inspiration for this work is the words of Pope Benedict XVI, "The world's wealth and resources do not belong to the select few; they also belong to the poor." In this year of his retirement we dedicate this book to him.

*Reclaiming the Commons* seeks to show that all aspects of the commons (air, water, land, culture, health access, education, communications, intellectual materials, silent space, commerce, and movement of people) need to be acknowledged. Thus, this becomes a concerted effort to empower the poor to rise and use the resources available to help save our wounded Earth. This is no easy task, because we have seen globalization hasten the enclosure of commons by the privileged few. Their influence via the media leads ordinary people to aspire to material prosperity as practiced by the super wealthy. When the emerging affluent were relatively few in number, our Earth could tolerate their practices. However, now as hundreds of millions enter the middle class, the emerging consuming culture is leading to virtually irreversible climate change, which threatens the vitality of this fragile planet.

This book defines three levels of eco-awareness: The first level is reached when we come to recognize forms of pollution and resource enclosure and relinquishment. The second level, as described in the first eight chapters involves remedial actions at the individual, local, regional, national, and global levels. The third level of eco-awareness penetrates to the heart of the environmental crisis and acknowledges the addictive nature of the current consumer culture. And, once accepted, overcoming an addiction demands calling on a Higher Power. We seek a non-violent revolutionary change in which the lowly take an integral role, namely to take back the commons from the rich retainers through a democratic process involving citizen participation.

Additionally in this book we describe a three-fold model: aspiring to be reclaimers of the commons, we seek to focus on our place (the HERE) with an urgency to act (the NOW) as change agents (the WE). Aspirants know our place (the HERE) in preserving air (Chapter One), protecting water (Chapter Two), and reapportioning land (Chapter Three). We consider actions directed to renewable energy, access to potable water, and sufficient land for food production and housing. Urgency to act

(the NOW) directs us to respect the past by celebrating culture (Chapter Four), the granting of a quality of life by affordable health care (Chapter Five), and a current sharing that comes from binding past and future hopes into a communications\intellectual commons (Chapter Six). Focus and urgency merge in change agents (the WE). We must act at the local level and onwards in establishing a balance of sounds and silence (Chapter Seven). On the other hand, we must regard the global as the perspective to extend fair trade and free movement to all people by proper commerce (Chapter Eight). We must become change agents (Chapter Nine), so that all may share a *Global Commons*, the path to a sustainable quality of life.

Saving our wounded Earth calls forth our deepest spiritual aspirations. The future is a divine/human, people-to-people, public/private and present/past/future generational sharing. All time belongs to God, but our God-given time is limited and we are moved to steward it properly. Believers challenge those who see no or little future: deniers who walk away; excuse-makers who refuse to engage themselves; escapists who cannot bear to face reality. Action involves risks; so does inaction, for this could lead to the destruction of our world. Believers are called to work, assist, encourage, pray, and support the reclaiming process.

Compassion is at the heart of a Global Commons for it energizes the sharing of work ahead. It is compassion that emerges from the Resurrection Mystery, from the Light of the World. The Global Commons is a shared hope absent of privilege, except the privilege of being of service to and for others. We seek to restore a natural world damaged, a perceived beauty marred; we share because we would otherwise deny the hope that keeps us going forward. In sharing, we reclaim; in failing to share we allow the path toward destruction to go unchallenged.

We are called to be parents of a new birth. Our labor and all suffering are not in vain; our fruitful work is our offspring, even if beyond our lifetime. We endeavor to give birth to and nurture the efforts that will surely come. If we regard them as solely "ours" of this generation, we have distorted ownership and excluded future generations from their rightful share. Our shared efforts will yield fruit in due time in a common destiny if we muster the courage to see it through.

This current edition is mainly directed to religious believers, because these often confuse piety with the current unsustainable economic order with its growing disparity of

wealth -- as though that wealth comes through a divine right. We seek to identify all people of good will and believers in the future; we invite them even before their birth to help with the noble efforts we strive to undertake here. We are one community, this present world and a new future; we must renounce material privilege and challenge the consumer culture whether in the East or West.

This book challenges us to take a pledge: to refuse to be enslaved or indebted to the pervasive consumption-oriented economic system; to strive to use appropriate technologies to live simply with a conservation ethic at the local level; to accept responsible environmental concerns at a regional level; to participate in innovative civic actions at a national level; and to applaud and support international and global programs. Together we announce an emerging *Global Commons*, a human and divine inspiration.

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