

JustSouth Monthly

JSRI Perspectives on FAITH DOING JUSTICE

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY NEW ORLEANS



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Much More Than Trifling A Catholic Response to Disturbing Climate Report

By Tom Ryan, Ph.D.

JSRI Future Activities

December 1
Fr. Fred Kammer will participate in a meeting of the Members of the Loyola Corporation.

JSRI Recent Activities

October 18
Dr. Sue Weishar attended a planning meeting of the Ethical Policing Is Courageous (EPIC) conference steering committee.

October 22
Dr. Dennis Kalob attended the Faith Labor Alliance Breakfast, which focused on economic justice issues and criminal justice reform, specifically the campaign for unanimous juries in Louisiana.

October 26
Dr. Weishar spoke at the Women Resource Center's Feminist Fridays gathering on how proposed Federal Rule changes will gut protections to immigration children provided by the *Flores* settlement agreement.

October 31 and November 1
Dr. Weishar collaborated with Dr. Patricia Boyett and Women's Resource Center students who collected 345 written comments from Loyola students and faculty in opposition to Trump Administration's proposed rules regarding the *Flores* settlement agreement at tabling events in the Danna Center.

November 2
Fr. Kammer participated in the board meeting for the Ignatian Solidarity Network in metro Washington D.C.

November 4
Fr. Kammer presented a workshop on social analysis at the Ignatian Family Teach-In in metro D.C.

November 8
The Development Committee of the JSRI Advisory Board met telephonically.

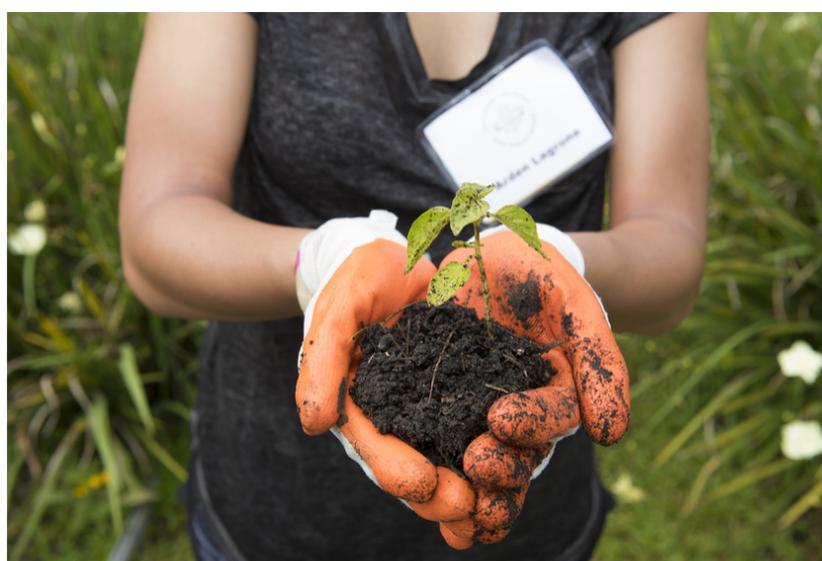
November 9
Dr. Weishar spoke at the annual Call to Action Conference in San Antonio on findings from the *Recovering the Human Face of Immigration in the US South* report that JSRI co-authored in 2017.

November 16-17
The JSRI Advisory Board held its semiannual meeting on campus. Board members attended the installation of President Tania Tetlow.

November 20
Dr. Kalob spoke to a group of students visiting from Sacred Heart Preparatory School in Atherton, CA about the work of JSRI and the social and environmental issues faced by the people of New Orleans.

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To my discredit, I've been something of an armchair environmentalist. I trifle with recycling and composting. Yet, I've mostly lived as if the grim effects of global warming would impact my children's children, not me. I'll be long gone when the worst of it hits.



A participant of Loyola's FaithActs Summer Youth Theology Institute helps plant a garden at Edible Schoolyard while learning about *Laudato Si'* and environmental justice here in the Gulf South.

Except, it looks like I may not be. The United Nations recently released a disturbing report on the threats—coming in the next twenty years—of climate change. Its findings are so dire and its call-to-action so dramatic that readers might be tempted to dismiss them or despair over them. Neither is an option for people of faith who have such powerful resources, theological and spiritual, for responding.

But first that report. Scientists from around the world on the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) argue that it is still possible to keep global temperature within a manageable range, but it will be very difficult.

The U.S. has actually reduced its greenhouse emissions over the last decade while the world's emissions have increased. Yet, the U.S. remains the second-largest emitter (after China) and produces more than twice as much as the third-largest (India).

In south Louisiana, we, painfully, know the cost of climate change—sea level rise and stronger hurricanes.

And there's a justice component. Failure will lead to droughts, floods, and fires that will harm food production, increase migration, and hurt the poor and vulnerable most of all.

One temptation is to reject the science. But Catholicism is about truth, no matter its source. Catholicism, like any good scientist, has revised its positions in light of scientific evidence to the contrary. We no longer reject evolution or locate ourselves at the center of the universe.

Yet, there is more to Catholicism than thought—scientific, biblical, or theological. It also suggests practices for responding to the dramatic actions urged by the IPCC. Catholics are good at abstinence. Lenten fasting is, in part, practice at saying "No" when the stakes are lower so that we can do so when they become higher.

And then there's the Eucharist. The Third Eucharistic Prayer depicts all creation as singing God's praise. The simple fruits of the earth and vine are means of the most intimate encounter with the Incarnate One. As part of the Sacrament of the Sick, the Eucharist was traditionally called "Viaticum," literally "provision for the journey." This term illuminates the Eucharist as a source of nourishment and strength along the way. Only with such divine support can we make the changes required.

Catholics today are achingly aware of human finitude. Yet, hope is a key Catholic virtue—hope not in ourselves but in God who fortifies us against the dismissiveness or despair that the IPCC report can trigger. This hope enacted in lives and laws can help us act for environmental justice not only for ourselves but for our children and our children's children.^[1]

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[1]For a "deeper dive" into climate reality and hope, see *Laudato Si'*—the encyclical of Pope Francis on Care for Our Common Home at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans. Please send feedback to jsri@loyno.edu

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