God’s Call to Something New: Journey Together for a Flourishing Future

This reflection document has been created to support the St. Clare Region in discernment toward a commitment to develop a Laudato Si’ Action Plan.

“Reducing unsustainability, although critical, will not create flourishing.”

John R. Ehrenfeld
Quotes/Excerpts for Reflection

Sustainability-related practices have implicitly focused, whether intentionally or not, on what business can do to mitigate harm or avoid disaster. In other words, the primary attention has been on being less bad. (p. 1)

If the term sustainability has run out of steam, we need not only a better meaning, but a better word, one that points to fresh practices and the possibility of far better results.... The right word is much more ambitious: flourishing. Flourishing at all levels—individual, team, organizational, and global. Think flourishing relationship, radiant health, thriving enterprises, and humming communities. (p 8-9)

Flourishing is not anchored in mundane notions of continuity. It is not about passing along what it is now available.... Instead, flourishing is about the world for which we all yearn. It’s about “thriving,” “doing well,” and “prospering,” (according to the Collins English Thesaurus), and about “growing and developing in a healthy or vigorous way, especially as the result of a particularly congenial environment” (Collins Dictionary). (p.9)

Our challenge is to realize and acknowledge how much we are caged in by ideas that are no longer working for us, and to begin to see what can be made possible with the power of new words and new practices. (p.9)

The word flourishing has the power to engage a broad range of people, from leaders to front-line employees and supply-chain participants, in a way that sustainability does not. (p. 9)

[Organizations] that can see flourishing in their vision and mission are able to engage fully the potential of everyone ... and attract the best partners.... (p.9) When our goal is flourishing, caring becomes more vital than ever.... The ... role becomes one of creating environments where people can experience a deeper sense of connection to, and care for, others and the world around. (p. 21 paraphrased)

1 From – Flourishing Enterprise: The New Spirit of Business; Laszlo, Chris and Brown, Judy Sorum ©2014, Stanford University Press
We are fundamentally interconnected with each other and with all species…. None of us exists as a completely separate entity…. “Ubuntu – I am what I am because of who we all are.”

“The one is in the whole and the whole is in the one.”
Plotinus

Our beliefs shape our actions in the world. What we choose to do is a manifestation of our thinking, which in return is driven by our beliefs and mental models.

Flourishing depends on action coming from deep wisdom. Flourishing at all levels—individual, organizational, societal, and global—begins in actions that come from a connected, loving relationship with oneself, others, and all of life. Such a way of being needs to be evident at all levels, regardless of one’s role. (P. 69)
Beginners – by Denise Levertov

But we have only begun
to love the earth.
We have only begun
to imagine the fullness of life.
How could we tire of hope?
—so much is in bud.
How can desire fail?
—we have only begun
to imagine justice and mercy,
only begun to envision
how it might be
to live as siblings with beast and flower,
not as oppressors.
Surely our river
cannot already be hastening
into the sea of nonbeing?
Surely it cannot
drag, in the silt,
all that is innocent?
Not yet, not yet—
there is too much broken
that must be mended,
too much hurt we have done to each other
that cannot yet be forgiven.
We have only begun to know
the power that is in us if we would join
our solitudes in the communion of struggle.
So much is unfolding that must
complete its gesture,
so much is in bud.
QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

To flourish requires that we think about, dream about, talk about what is being created now as it impacts what we desire for the future.

Think about the youngest person you know and love. Envision the kind of world that you want to leave for that young person.