

EARTH CHARTER

Study Guide

SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME • SHALOM North America
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MAKING CONNECTIONS & MAKING CHOICES

Section III **connects** environmental concerns, economic policies, and social well-being of all peoples. Its principles are central to United Nations' charters to eradicate poverty, establish equitable, sustainable development, and provide gender equity. This section is firmly rooted in the incredibly **urgent** calls of Scripture, church leaders, and *You Are Sent*. In 1971, bishops of the world left no doubt, "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel" *Justice in the World* We are all novices and pioneers in making earth consciousness with full social and economic eco-justice a reality!

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SECTION III: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE by S. Barbara Paleczny, CA/DA

The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people of this age, . . . these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.

Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, #1

We hold in our hearts those who make visible the effects of the present global, socio-economic system: **WORLDWIDE:** the 27 million slaves, 18 million refugees, and 3 billion who earn less than \$2 a day. **USA:** 30 % live in poverty.



"The very stones cry out for a tidal wave of justice." by Barb Paleczny, SSND

CANADA: 17.6 % live in poverty. **We see from their perspective.**

The heart of the matter is **to connect** global trade agendas, World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO) policies and control by transnational corporations and financiers on the one hand, **and** the explosion of poverty, slavery, and trafficking of persons on the other. We used to speak of the *marginalized* on the edge of the economy. Now brutal, financial or speculative capitalism leaves hundreds of millions of people as *disposables*. This reality sheds light on all of the concerns and principles in this section. Although consideration of them is not easy, it is profoundly significant.

What is your understanding or experience of "disposable" people?

ARE WE WILLING?

ARE WE WILLING TO CHOOSE, TO CHALLENGE BLATANT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INJUSTICES

- **Earth Charter #9:**

Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.

Read aloud points 9 a, b, and c from the Earth Charter. These are directly related to the first two United Nations' Millennium Development Goals: to eliminate extreme poverty and hunger and to achieve universal primary education.

It is possible to do this. The challenge for us: Are we willing to analyze, confront, and change exploitative structures, examining together the system that creates and increases both wealth and destitution? Who or what can help us do that?



The world is increasingly two-tiered with the accumulating sector and those serving it, all within a global context of unprecedented pollution and violence. The environmental crisis facing humanity is a world threatened, either because people have too much, or too little. The present course is unsustainable and postponing action is no longer an option.

“We should assess economic globalization from every angle, but especially from the ‘bottom up,’ focusing first on how it touches people who have no place at the table.” A Place At The Table, USCCB, p. 10

Where do you see yourself in the “two-tiered” world – in the accumulating sector or in those serving it, or perhaps in both at times?

- **Earth Charter #10:**

Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.

Read aloud (even alone!) Earth Charter #10 a-d, and then Isaiah: “What do you mean that you crush my people and grind the faces of the poor?” (Is.3:15) “Woe to you who add house to house and field to field until no room remains.” (Is. 5:8) In both biblical and contemporary challenges, social and economic justice is the central way to know the all-holy God (Is. 5:16). Redistribution of wealth is one of the most controversial topics we can imagine. Promoting equitable distribution of wealth requires fair trade agreements (not free) and just taxation to cover public responsibilities such as health care and education.

You may have heard about the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) or WATER FOR PEOPLE AND NOT FOR PROFITS or FAIR TRADE COFFEE or the Taco Bell boycott.

**How are these related to Earth Charter #10?
How do these efforts involve you?**

WWW: World Wide Web

World-Wide Web,
Globalization, weaving *best strands* with heart:
Draws all humanity, all creation TOGETHER:
Interacting: cross-cultural,
Deciding: for Earth,
Creating: just global economies!
www.willing.willing.willing.

But globalization, masked invader,
accumulates wealth and power,
plunders nature,
controls what counts as valid knowledge
imposes one class, one race, often one gender on others
Not neutral in values, priorities, use of power
This global *destroyer*.

People create systems: *www*
People change systems: *www*
Choose alternatives: *weave world wisely!*

Poem and painting by Barbara Paleczny, SSND

Weaving Peace and Justice: Just as 30,000 species of spiders weave their webs from within, so also we can weave cultures of peace, nonviolence and justice throughout the world.

ARE WE WILLING?

ARE WE WILLING TO CHANGE STRUCTURES?

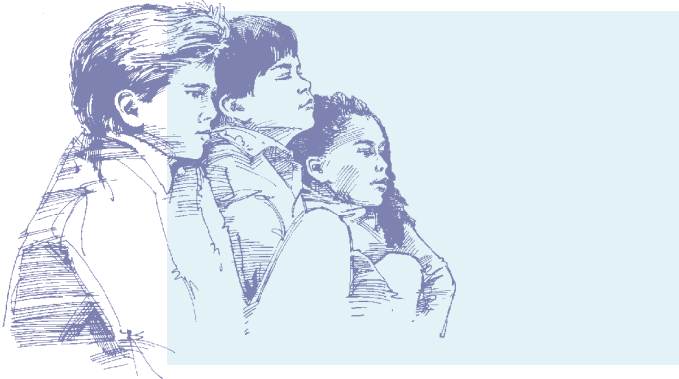
- **Earth Charter #11:**

Affirm gender equality and equity.

Read aloud: Earth Charter #11 a-c.

How is this already happening?

In your experience or ministry connections, what still needs to change?



- **Earth Charter #12:**

Uphold the right of all, without discrimination . . . with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.

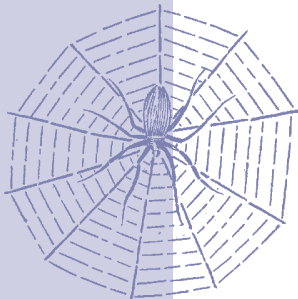
Read aloud: Earth Charter #12 a-d.

What is one positive step you/we can take to apply or strengthen each of these? What is your experience of discrimination of any kind, either personally or in general? What do you know about the spirituality and/or culture of indigenous people?

1. ATTITUDES can be structures that “box us in”; for example, that some have a right to accumulate wealth and resources regardless of the cost on others, a “divine right” to accumulate property. Extremes of wealth and poverty destroy our ability to sit at table together. What attitudes liberate? Since we, as a congregation, are within the world’s very educated groups, *are we willing* to read, learn, and do our “homework” to learn basics related to social and economic justice?

2. ECONOMIC POLICIES: Compound interest rates double debt every decade even though countries have already paid back over ten times what they borrowed.

3. SOCIAL JUSTICE CAMPAIGNS support fair trade and responsible business but *oppose* the immoral practices of the corporate agenda and its *liberalization of the economy*:



- Maximization of profits for corporations and shareholders.
- Low corporate taxes. Tax cuts for the wealthy.
- Deregulation: NO regulations or limits for transnational companies.
- Privatization: even of essential resources and services (water, transportation, oil)
- High interest rates increase wealth (and debt).
- *Jobless recovery*: chronic high unemployment worldwide; temporary, part-time work, low pay, no benefits. *Competition for profit* thrives on others’ *competition for lowest wages*. The IMF, WB, and WTO force these on debtor nations in the form of Structural Adjustment Programs and control governments’ priorities and social organization.

In what ways do we participate in and even benefit from these economic liberalization policies? What do we need to know to change? How are we willing to change?

In 2002 Developing Countries received over \$58 billion in development aid

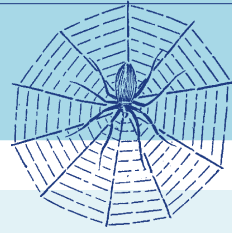
**BUT
There's
a Hole in
the Bucket**

In 2002 Developing Countries repaid over 5 times that amount in Debt Servicing: \$324 billion

www.debtireland.org

NEXT STUDY GUIDE April 2005

Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace: S. Jeanne Wingenter



ALTERNATIVES ALTERNATIVES ARE POSSIBLE!

1. INTERNATIONAL ACTION TO REGULATE CAPITAL:

In 1978, James Tobin, a Nobel prizewinning American economist, proposed a very small tax on foreign exchange transactions. Even a .1 percent (1/10 of 1%) tax could end world poverty.

2. GOVERNMENT, CHURCH AND A RELIGIOUS CONGREGATION'S COMMITMENT TO END CHILD POVERTY

is evident in its spending priorities. *Catholic Social Teaching* urges: the needs of the poor take priority over the wants of the rich! Rights of workers take priority over profits and technology!

In 1990, in "Peace With God, Peace With All Creation", Pope John Paul II wrote: The world needs "carefully coordinated solutions based on a morally coherent worldview" and new solidarity.

What should be included in a "morally coherent worldview"?
What does solidarity mean to you?

ACTION ACTION

Perhaps the greatest action is to create awareness that alternatives are possible. What helps us to listen courageously to others even if they disagree with us, to speak what is most deeply hidden in our hearts, and to sort out possible first steps?

- See the video, "Modern Slavery" www.freetheslaves.org and, from their perspective, read and pray over the books of Isaiah!
- In Canada, support the National Poverty Organization (NAPO), its Youth Poverty Initiative and Living Wage Campaign and Kairos' initiatives.
- Encourage USA to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Learn more about one campaign and support it!



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HOPE-FILLED ACTION LEARN MORE ABOUT HOPE-FILLED ACTION

www.devp.org Development and Peace, development agency of the Canadian Catholic Church

www.freethechildren.org By and for youth on several continents.

www.iabolish.org Anti-Slavery Group. Student Campaign, S.T.O.P.

www.newint.org *New Internationalist*. Read online: #352: *Get It Right: Success Stories!* #257: *Squeezing the South*. # 334: World Trade Organization.

www.womenink.org INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S TRIBUNE CENTER: materials on women and development.

David Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World*. (Kumarian Press, Inc., Bloomfield, CT, 2001)

Inspiring, practical, readable analysis of the rise of both corporate power and civic responsibility.