



EARTH CHARTER Study Guide

SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME • SHALOM North America
APRIL 2005

DEMOCRACY NONVIOLENCE & PEACE

Part IV of the Earth Charter is a call to action for individuals, communities, institutions, and governments both at the local and global levels to achieve a truly democratic and nonviolent way of life. It focuses on democratic institutions, formal and life-long education, respect for all life and promotes a culture of peace.

by S. Jeanne Wingenter, SSND (MK)

DEMOCRACY

Democracy - government in which power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation; the common people as the source of political authority. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

PRINCIPLE 13

PRINCIPLE 13

Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice.

- ❖ In what ways have you exercised "power vested in the people" either through contact with legislators, letters to the editor, taking part in a public protest or demonstration, or even civil disobedience?
- ❖ What does representative government mean to you, beyond voting once every few years?

PRINCIPLE 13

Read Principle 13 and subpoints a-f.

What key words or phrases speak most clearly to you?

"We must let our government leaders know that we support a spirit of collaborative engagement in world affairs – not just with regard to terrorism, but on the many fronts required to build a global culture of peace. In this regard, we must give the United Nations strong and consistent support, financially, diplomatically and morally. The United Nations was founded first and foremost to prevent war and to promote peace, and it is absolutely essential at this stage in human history."



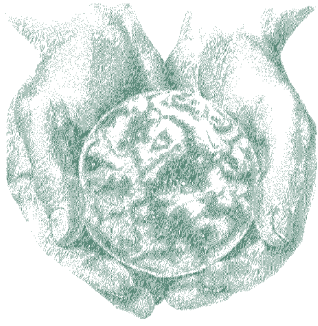
Steven C. Rockefeller, "The Earth Charter: Building a Global Culture of Peace," *The Ecozoic Reader*, Fall, 2001.

- ❖ What do you see as strengths and weaknesses of the United Nations?
- ❖ What do you see as the role or responsibility of the United States in the United Nations?
- ❖ What is our role as a member of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) at

From the Message of Pope John Paul II for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2005:

"Can an individual find complete fulfillment without taking account of his social nature, that is, his being 'with' and 'for' others? . . . Each person, in some way, is called to work for the common good, constantly looking out for the good of others as if it were his own. This responsibility belongs in a particular way to political authorities at every level, since they are called to create that sum of social conditions which permit and foster in human beings the integral development of their person."

- ❖ How do you define "common good"?
- ❖ How does this passage relate to Principle 13?



PRINCIPLE 14

Read Principle 14 and subpoints a-d.

The Earth Charter sees formal education and lifelong learning as fundamental to achieve and maintain a sustainable way of life.

“An education in ecological responsibility is urgent: responsibility for oneself, for others, and for the Earth A true education in responsibility entails a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behavior. Churches and religious bodies, non-governmental organizations, indeed all members of society, have a precise role to play in such education. The first educator, however, is the family where the child learns to respect his/her neighbor and to love nature.”

Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace, Jan. 1, 1990

PRINCIPLE 14

PRINCIPLE 14
Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.



- ❖ What should be included in “an education in ecological responsibility”?
- ❖ How might the arts and humanities (poetry, song, dance, story) help to balance or complete the sciences in promoting sustainability education?



MEDIA CONGLOMERATES

A small group of multinational companies dominates the world of media through their ownership of media stations and outlets and has greater political and economic power than ever before in the history of the U.S. media. This is known as media conglomeration.



WHO OWNS WHAT

Disney owns ABC network, 10 local TV stations, over 60 radio stations, and more than 10 cable stations.

Viacom owns CBS network, MTV, Showtime, 174 radio stations and Blockbuster Video.

Time Warner Company owns America Online, all 8 CNN stations, HBO, TBS, TNT, and Time, Fortune, Sports Illustrated and People Magazines.

Rupert Murdoch owns all Fox Networks, the New York Post newspaper, the Times (London) newspaper, plus 60 papers in the U.K. and Australia.

General Electric, in addition to its \$2.8 billion in military contracts, owns NBC, CNBC, Bravo and, in partnership with Microsoft, msnbc.com.

Clear Channel Communications, the largest radio station owner in history, now owns 1200 radio stations in 300 markets as well as 40 local affiliates of Fox, ABC, NBC and CBS.

Gannett owns USA Today, The Detroit News, The Cincinnati Enquirer, El Paso Times, The Army Times, The Navy Times, The Air Force Times, and over 100 more news papers.

Source: Columbia Journalism Review, www.cjr.org

“ . . . men and women of the media are especially bound to contribute to peace in all parts of the world by breaking down barriers of mistrust, fostering consideration of the point of view of others, and striving always to bring peoples and nations together in mutual understanding and respect, to reconciliation and mercy.” Pope John Paul II, Message for the 37th World Communications Day, 2003

PRINCIPLE 15

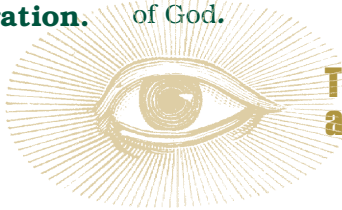
PRINCIPLE 15
Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.

PRINCIPLE 14

Principle 15 invites us to treat all living beings with respect and consideration, focusing especially on nonhuman beings.

In the *Book of Genesis*, after God has finished creating light and darkness, water and land, plants and animals of all kinds, God says: “Let us make humans in our image, after our likeness. (*Gen. 1:26*) To whom was God speaking? Who is included in the word “our”?

While our religious tradition teaches that humans are made in the image and likeness of God, perhaps we should seriously consider a broader interpretation of *Genesis 1:26*, that all creation is in the image of God. The *Genesis* account says that, in response to all that is created, God sees that it is good, that it is of God.



The day of my spiritual awakening was the day I saw, and knew I saw, all things in God and God in all things.

Mechtild of Magdeburg *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*

- ❖ In what ways might you more clearly see all things in God and God in all things?

Principle 15 condemns the practice of factory models of animal farming that are cruel, basically unhealthy, and use unnatural methods to increase production. It also condemns commercial models of hunting, trapping and fishing that cause prolonged pain or avoidable suffering as well as the taking of nontargeted species.



- ❖ What do you know about how the chicken, eggs, beef, or pork that you buy are raised? How is that related to Principle 15?
- ❖ How might this principle also apply to rodeos or sport fishing (catch and release) or even to horse races?



- ❖ Taking into account the fact that many media stations and outlets are owned by multinational corporations whose bottom line is maximum profit, how might they slant or frame the news on topics such as consumerism, global warming, environmental protections, or even military actions?

- ❖ How does media concentration, particularly of news, affect democracy?

One has to look no further than last November's election or the terrorism color code alerts to realize the gap between the Pope's message and current major media operations. Consider making use of alternate sources of media outside of the U.S. mainstream in order to gain a well-rounded understanding of news items. Some of those alternate sources include the following:

Democracy Now! – www.democracynow.org
Alternet – www.alternet.org
Common Dreams New Center – www.commondreams.org



NEXT STUDY GUIDE July 2005

The Way Forward: S. Ann Scholz, SSND (SL)

WHAT IS A CULTURE OF PEACE?

PRINCIPLE 16

PRINCIPLE 16
Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace.

The message of **Principle 16** is obvious – promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence and peace. **But what is a culture of peace?** I invite you to read and reflect on the following resources, to make your own connections, hopefully to raise serious questions and be moved to action. What leads to peace is not violence but peaceableness, which is not passivity but an alert, informed, practiced, and active state of being. We should recognize that while we have extravagantly subsidized the means of war, we have almost totally neglected the ways of peaceableness. We have, for example, several national military academies, but not one peace academy. We have ignored the teachings and examples of Christ, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and other peaceable leaders. And here we have an inescapable duty to notice also that war is profitable, whereas the means of peaceableness, being cheap or free, make no money.

The key to peaceableness is continuous practice. It is wrong to suppose that we can exploit and impoverish the poorer countries, while arming them and instructing them in the newest means of war, and then reasonably expect them to be peaceable. We must not again allow public emotion or the public media to caricature our enemies. If our enemies are now to be some nations of Islam, then we should undertake to know those enemies. Our schools should begin to teach the histories, cultures, arts, and language of the Islamic nations. And our leaders should have the humility and the wisdom to ask the reason some of those people have for hating US. *“Thoughts in the Presence of Fear,”* Wendell Berry, *Orion Magazine* online, www.oriononline.org

Further resources:

- Addicted to War*, Joel Andreas, AK Press, Oakland CA 2003 www.addictedtowar.com
- The Buying of the Congress*, Charles Lewis, Avon Books, Inc., New York, NY 1998
- www.costofwar.org - comparison of the cost of the Iraq war with alternative ways the money could have been spent
- www.dopcampaing.org – efforts to establish a Department of Peace and Peace Academy.
- www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org - peace army trained to use nonviolent strategies to deter violence and protect human rights
- www.ipj-ppj.org – Institute for Peace & Justice – resources for nonviolence for schools and families
- www.space4peace.org – Global Network Against Weapons in Space
- www.agnt.org – Association for Global New Thought – Season of Nonviolence

❖ What does this say about our government’s priorities?

THE FISCAL YEAR 2005 FEDERAL DISCRETIONARY BUDGET INCLUDES:

- \$421. billion for Military (54%)
- \$60. billion for Education (7%)
- \$51. billion for Health (6%)
- \$30. billion for Housing Assistance (3.7%)
- \$28. billion for Natural Resources and Environment (3.4%)

Timeline, September/October 2004



“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.” Dwight D. Eisenhower, April 16, 1953

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