

# *EcoSpirit & EarthCare Magazine*



"Fridays for Future" Youth Mobilization in Munich, Germany on 9/20/2019 – Shutterstock / FooToo

*A Special Issue about SSGN'S New Youth Project:  
"EcoSpirit & EarthCare for Emerging  
Young Global Eco-Leaders"*

**JUNE 2025, NUMBER 2**



## *EcoSpirit & EarthCare Magazine*

**PUBLISHED BY  
SPIRITUALITY & SUSTAINABILITY GLOBAL NETWORK (SSGN)  
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## Message from the Magazine Editors



Amanda Bennett-Rivera, Editor,  
Joe Holland & Jim Maclellan, Associate Editors  
Email: [hello@ecospirit.life](mailto:hello@ecospirit.life)

DEAR FRIENDS,

**THIS ISSUE OF ECOSPIRIT & EARTHCARE MAGAZINE IS A SPECIAL ONE ABOUT SSGN'S NEW ECOSPIRIT & EARTHCARE YOUTH PROJECT.** This Project will focus on forming and guiding high-school Ecology Clubs in Catholic high schools across the Greater New York City Metropolitan Area, with a special a pilot project at Mary Louis Academy in Jamaica, Queens.

**MR. JOSEPH MULLER WILL DIRECT THE SSGN ECOSPIRIT & EARTHCARE YOUTH PROJECT.** Joe is a Theology teacher at Brooklyn Jesuit Prep in New York City, and he has both bachelor's and master's degrees in Theology. Plus, he's a highly experienced organizer of Ecology Clubs for high-school youth. Joe's joining us as SSGN's Youth Project Director is a providential blessing!

**TO MAKE THIS PROJECT HAPPEN, WE NEED TO RAISE \$15,000 TO SUPPORT JOE AND FOR PROJECT EXPENSES.** We plan to give Joe a \$1,000.00 monthly stipend and allocate \$3,000 for project expenses. But Joe is worth so much more, given his rich experience and expertise, and given the enormous amount of time and energy he will put into the project.

**TO RAISE THIS \$15,000, SSGN IS STARTING ITS YOUTH PROJECT FUNDRAISING DRIVE.** If you are on our email list, we will contact you soon to request a donation. First, SSGN will contact its Directors and Advisers to ask for substantial donations. Later, in the Fall, we will contact everyone else on SSGN's email list to again ask for substantial donations.

**IF YOU ARE NOT ON THE SSGN EMAIL LIST, please send an email to [hello@ecospirit.com](mailto:hello@ecospirit.com) to sign up. You can also donate at <https://spirituality-sustainability.net>. (click on the "DONATE" button).**

*Amanda, Joe, & Jim*



## Meet Joe Muller!

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**JOSEPH MULLER** is a husband and father of two, as well as a long-time Theology teacher and writer. As a teacher, Joe has spent his career teaching Scripture and Ethics, including courses on Environmental Ethics. He also composed a rhyming epic poem based on the Gospels, *Changing Water into Wine: The Gospels in Rhyme*, which can be found at [www.changingwaterintowine.com](http://www.changingwaterintowine.com). Joe has volunteered with the Catholic Climate Covenant and the Laudato Sí Movement, moderated environmental clubs in several high schools, and formed an environmental stewardship group in his parish in Queens, New York.



“Fridays for Future” Youth Mobilization, Milan, Italy, 9/20/2019 – Shutterstock / Andreas Pinacci

## *Joe Muller's Vision for Youth*

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**MY EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS**, especially in high schools and knowing about groups in other high schools, is that many of them have some highly motivated, idealistic students, but they lack direction in how to build effective environmental change.

**GIVEN THE SCALE OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS**, students very easily feel helpless to challenge it. High school clubs often die out for this reason. Those that survive frequently fail to receive support from their school and community, and they experience limited outcomes for change.

**STUDENTS KNOW THAT LOCAL SHIFTS ARE ONLY THE FIRST STEP**, and they want to scale their impact to the size of the problem. We have seen groups like “Fridays for Future” empower young people to become major voices on the issue.

**WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING**, and older people feel safe from pending future disasters, groups lack the motivation and drive to make systematic change happen.

**I WOULD LIKE TO CREATE A YOUTH NETWORK** to share ideas and events. In addition, we need to train and empower young people as climate activists, harnessing their passion and creativity, to lobby religious, business, and political leaders on local, statewide and national issues.

**WE NEED TO TEACH THESE STUDENTS, BEGINNING AT THE LOCAL CHURCH LEVEL**, how to get their neighborhood involved in the issue and to work together with existing groups on the ground.

**I WILL FOCUS THIS PROJECT ON NEW YORK CITY AND ITS SUBURBAN AREAS.** These are places where the Catholic Church and other religious bodies have a larger presence, and where business leaders make decisions with far-reaching effects.

**ONE OF MY BIGGEST GOALS WILL BE TO USE STUDENTS' VOICES** – with their sincerity, their anxiety, and their vulnerability – to put pressure on local religious leaders to speak out to challenge those who harm Creation, and to do so in a powerful way that matches the scale of our ecological crisis.

**I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH SSGN ON THIS NEW PROJECT.** I will especially welcome your advice and perhaps participation in this project. And I am most grateful, and the students will also be most grateful, for your generous financial support.

*Joe Muller*





“Fridays for Future” Youth Mobilization in Munich, Germany on 9/20/2019 – Shutterstock / FooToo

## CONCEPT PAPER

### FUNDRAISING FOR SSGN’S NEW YOUTH PROJECT “EcoSpirit & EarthCare with Emerging Young Global Eco-Leaders”

#### THE NEW & GREAT WORLD-HISTORICAL THREAT

**FOR SOME, THE FUTURE MAY SEEM HOPELESS**, due to our political and economic leaders’ global failure to respond adequately to what we call the catastrophic and still-expanding “Global Ecological Devastation.” In addition, the Global New Right, often funded by what many call a new “Global Oligarchy” of billionaires, is aggressively driving the human global political economy toward what science-writer Elizabeth Kolbert has defined as the “Sixth Extinction” of biological life across our home planet Earth.

However, despite the failure of global economic and political leaders, and despite the dangerous rise of the Global New Right, we see emerging two powerful sources of prophetic challenge that are now boldly responding to the world-historical threat of Global Ecological Devastation.

- a. **EcoSpirit & EarthCare.** The first powerful source of prophetic energy is Ecological Spirituality (“EcoSpirit” for short) and its practical expression in Ecological Ethics (“EarthCare” for short).<sup>1</sup> This energy is now arising from leaders of many World Religions. Two leading examples are the late Pope Francis’ powerful 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Si’ – On Care for Our Common Home*, and the equally powerful 2024 Islamic document *Al Mizan – A Covenant for the Earth*.<sup>2</sup>
- b. **Emerging Young Global Eco-Leaders.** The second untapped source is new generations of what our SSGN Board of Directors’ members Amanda Bennett-Rivera and Sam King have called for the Earth Charter community “*Emerging Earth leaders*.” We give them the longer name of “Emerging Young Global Eco-Leaders.”

This new SSGN Youth Project will draw on both those emerging prophetic sources. It will then design and implement an EcoSpirit & EarthCare program for high school students to form them in Ecological Spirituality and Ecological Ethics, and to support their prophetic actions to rescue the threatened Biosphere of our loving Creator’s beloved garden-planet Earth.

## SPIRITUALITY & SUSTAINABILITY

Following a long series of international Conferences on Spirituality & Sustainability, held between 1990 and 2018 in Italy’s spiritual city of Assisi (home of St.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on Ecological Spirituality and Ecological Ethics challenging the global “New Right” wave imposing anti-ecological authoritarianism, see Joe Holland’s recent article in the JOURNAL OF ECOSPIRIT & EARTHCARE titled “Global Ecological Devastation” (Winter 2025 Issue) and his 2017 BOOK *POSTMODERN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY* from Pacem in Terris Press and available from Amazon.

<sup>2</sup> See [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) and <https://www.almizan.earth>.



Francis) and at the Vatican, we launched our new organization called the “Spirituality & Sustainability Global Network” (SSGN). We set it up in 2019 as a non-profit body.

Now, the prophetic theme of “EcoSpirit-EarthCare” has become SSGN’s core project. Our new main goal is to recruit and mentor new generations of “emerging young global eco-leaders” in EcoSpirit & EarthCare, and to do so in light of SSGN’s four foundational pillars. These four pillars are: 1) Indigenous Traditions, 2) the mystical cosmovision of the late Thomas Berry, 3) Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Sí*, and 4) the Earth Charter. (See <https://spirituality-sustainability.net>.)

### SSGN’S FOUR FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS

1. **Indigenous Traditions.** First, while seeking inspiration from all eco-spiritual and eco-ethical wisdom traditions across our human family, we especially seek to learn from Indigenous Traditions. We seek to learn from their celebration of our Creator’s deeply spiritual gift of our *sacred* Cosmos, our *sacred* garden-planet Earth, and all of Earth’s *sacred* and beautiful creatures.
2. **Thomas Berry’s mystical-cosmic vision.** Second, we draw on the writings of the late cultural historian, Catholic priest, and eco-visionary, Thomas Berry. He was inspired in part by the visionary French Jesuit priest and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. We especially promote Thomas’ book, written late in his life, *THE GREAT WORK: OUR WAY INTO THE FUTURE* (Three Rivers Press / Random House, 1999). This book analyzes the root causes of the current ecological breakdown of Modern Industrial Civilization. It also summons us to create a new “Eozoic Era” to save the Biosphere of our garden-planet Earth. We hope to mentor emerging young global eco-leaders in Thomas’ mystical cosmovision of life’s sacred and creative communion.
3. **The Earth Charter.** Third, we draw on this visionary global document with its own four pillars: 1) Respect and Care for the Community of Life, 2) Ecological Integrity, 3) Social and Economic Justice, and 4) Democracy, Nonviolence, and

Peace. People across the world created the Earth Charter as a foundational vision for global governance. It provides ecological and social values and principles to guide global governance for a sustainable, just, peaceful, and democratic future. We hope to mentor emerging young global eco-leaders in the Earth Charter's four pillars and related principles.

4. **Laudato Si' – On Care for our Common Home.** Fourth, we draw on Pope Francis' 2015 prophetic eco-spiritual letter on integral ecology. It indicates that we are now entering what Pope Paul VI in 1970 warned could become an "ecological catastrophe under the effective explosion of Industrial Civilization." We seek to mentor emerging young global eco-leaders *in Laudato Si's* prophetic vision of Ecological Spirituality and Ecological Ethics.

### **FUNDRAISING DRIVE**

*(For a Part-Time Director & Expenses for this SSGN Youth Project across the Greater New York City Metropolitan Region & beyond)*

We are launching this SSGN Youth Project Fundraising Drive to raise at least \$15,000 -- to support Mr. Joe Muller, a Catholic secondary-school Theology teacher and a visionary and experienced eco-justice organizer, as a part-time SSGN Youth Project Director who will work within the New York City Greater Metro Region. With your generosity, we hope to pay Joe a stipend of \$1,000.00 per month for an initial 12 months (\$12,000 for 1 year) and allocate \$3,000 for project expenses.

- a. **Pilot Project.** Joe's work will include a pilot project that will begin work with young female secondary school students at Mary Louis Academy, sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood and located in New York City's Jamaica section of the Borough of Queens. We will also work in cooperation with Thomas Berry Place (a Passionist retreat center very close to the school), and in support of the eco-vision of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood (whose headquarters are close by in Long Island).

- b. **Regional Expansion.** At the same time, the project will develop a network of “Ecology Clubs” in other Catholic high schools across the New York City Greater Metro region (something Joe Muller has been working on for several years).
- c. **Wider Outreach.** Further, these Sisters of St. Joseph have a rich history of Eco-Spirit & EarthCare! In addition, there could be wider outreach across the region into Long Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, and even to Puerto Rico. (The Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood have three more schools in the region, plus one in Puerto Rico.)
- d. **Study Manuals.** The project will eventually develop study manuals, perhaps both in English and Spanish versions, and based on SSGN’s four pillars and other resourceful materials. We will invite SSGN members who have already worked in these areas to help develop these materials.
- e. **Project Advisers.** We invite Sam King, Amanda Bennett-Rivera, and César Baldelomar, all young and experienced SSGN eco-leaders, to serve as the SSGN Advisory Committee for this Youth Project. Finally, the project may also develop what we will call a broader "Young Eco-Leaders International Dialogue Council" by inviting established young religious eco-leaders from across the globe to become project dialogue partners in the project. Toward this goal, we are already developing invaluable links in Africa.

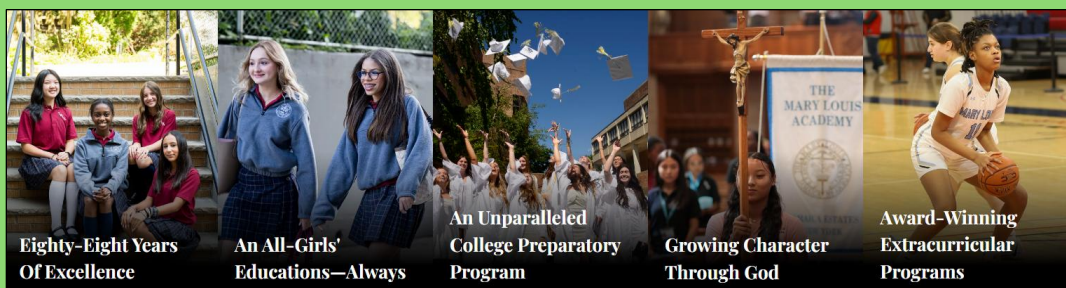




# *The Mary Louis Academy*

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As noted, we hope to begin our EcoSpirit & EarthCare Youth Project with a special “pilot project” at The Mary Louis Academy, a Catholic high school for girls in Jamaica, Queens, in New York City. It is sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood, New York. The Sisters have long been pioneers in ecology with major programs in ecological ministry.



# *Our New African Youth Connection*

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Thanks to SSGN Board of Directors member Sam King, we recently made a warm connection with Allen Ottaro, founder of the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa, which now has chapters in 10 African countries.



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Email: [info@cynesa.org](mailto:info@cynesa.org)



## Webinar Recap Youth Religious Environmentalism in Africa

**Watch the Replay:** <https://youtu.be/2lWKBvjLmEg>



Thank you to everyone who joined us for our inspiring SSGN Conversation with Allen Ottaro, founder of the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA). Whether you were able to attend or not, we're excited to share the replay with you!

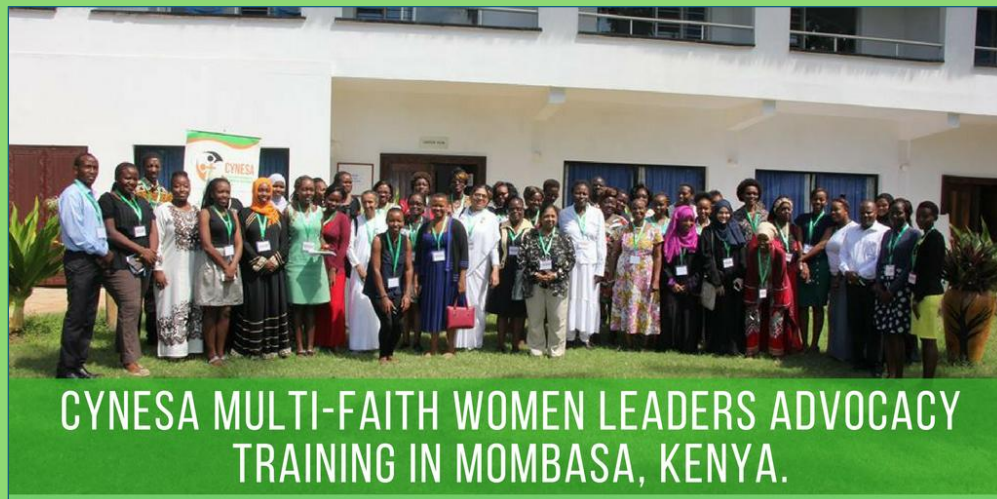


This conversation explored the intersection of **faith, youth, and environmental sustainability in Africa**, and sparked meaningful dialogue on:

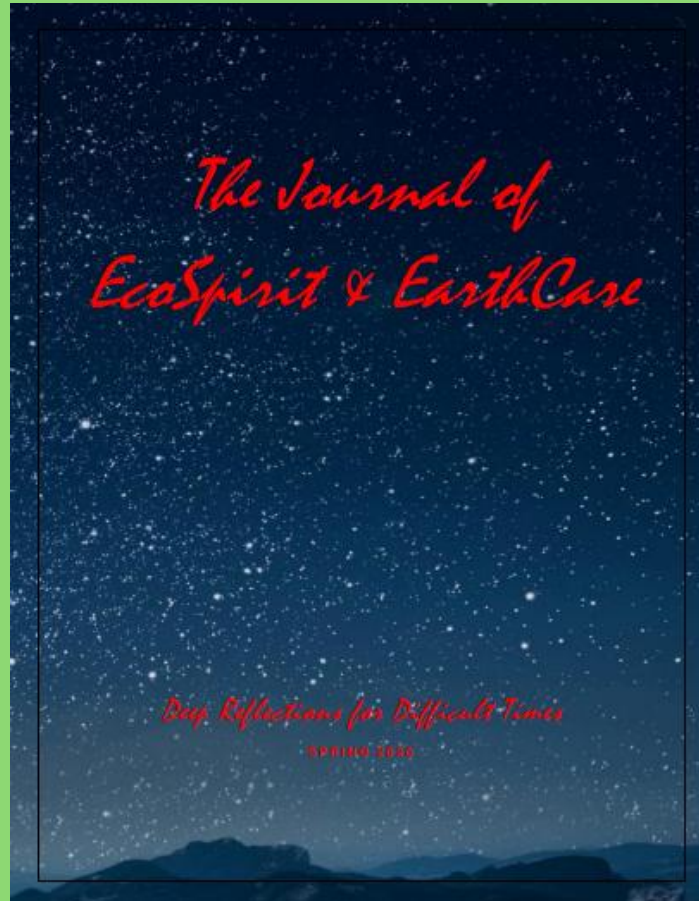
- Empowering youth through Catholic social teaching for climate justice
- Reimagining rural life and agriculture through eco-villages
- Challenges and opportunities in Africa's shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy

We also discussed the potential for continued collaboration with youth leaders globally. Whether you're passionate about interfaith action, sustainability, or grassroots leadership, there's something valuable here for you.

**Missed it live?** Now's your chance to catch up and be part of this vital conversation.



Our Spring 2025 Issue of  
**ECOSPIRIT EARTHCARE JOURNAL**  
Now Available!



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The first edition of our new Journal features long-form essays and reflections on spirituality, sustainability, and ecological transformation. Please share this edition with friend and, if you have contributions for future issues, we'd love to hear from you!

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## **BOOKS FROM BY PACEM IN TERRIS PRESS**

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## AFRICANA STUDIES

### THE METHODIST CHURCH IN AFRICA SINCE 1820

Pianapue T.K. Early, 2020  
Forward by Bishop David Greaves

### DJUANKAYU THE BASSA-AFRICAN CREATION STORY *A Postcolonial Practical Theology* Pianapue T. K. Early, 2020

### AFRICAN ENCOUNTER OF FAITH & CULTURE *Ritual & Symbol for Young People in Tiv Society of Central Nigeria* Clement Terseer Iorliam, 2020

### BOTTOM ELEPHANTS *Catholic Sexual Ethics & Pastoral Practice in Africa: The Challenge of Women Living within Patriarchy & Threatened by HIV-Positive Husbands* Daniel Ude Asue, 2014

### HUMANITY'S AFRICAN ROOTS *Remembering the Ancestors' Wisdom* Joe Holland, 2012

## CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

### SUMMARY & COMMENTARY FOR PACEM IN TERRIS *The Famous Encyclical Letter of Pope John XXIII on World Peace* Joe Holland, 2020

### CATHOLIC LABOR PRIESTS *Five Giants in the United States Catholic Bishops Social Action Department Volume I of US Labor Priests During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* Patrick Sullivan, 2014

### CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING & UNIONS IN CATHOLIC PRIMARY & SECONDARY SCHOOLS *The Clash between Theory & Practice within the United States* Walter "Bob" Baker, 2014

### PACEM IN TERRIS *Its Continuing Relevance for the Twenty-First Century (Papers from the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference at the United Nations)* Josef Klee & Francis Dubois, Editors, 2013

**100 YEARS OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING  
DEFENDING WORKERS & THEIR UNIONS**

*Summaries & Commentaries for Five Landmark Papal Encyclicals*  
Joe Holland, 2012

**THE "POISONED SPRING" OF ECONOMIC LIBERTARIANISM**

*Menger, Mises, Hayek, Rothbard: A Critique from  
Catholic Social Teaching of the Austrian School of Economics*  
Pax Romana / Cmica-usa  
Angus Sibley, 2011

**BEYOND THE DEATH PENALTY**

*The Development in Catholic Social Teaching  
(Florida Council of Catholic Scholarship)*  
D. Michael McCarron & Joe Holland, Editors, 2007

**CHRISTIAN HISTORY, THEOLOGY, & SPIRITUALITY**

**THE NEXT STAGE OF CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS LIFE**

*Postmodern Lay Mystical-Prophetic Communities  
Based on Ecological Spirituality*  
Joe Holland, 2020

**ROMAN CATHOLIC CLERICALISM**

*Three Historical Stages in the Legislation of a Non-Evangelical,  
Now Dysfunctional, and Sometimes Pathological Institution*  
Joe Holland, 2018

**CATHOLIC PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

*A Genealogy of the Methodological Turn to Praxis,  
Historical Reality, & the Preferential Option for the Poor*  
Bob Pennington, 2018

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*His Prophetic Mysticism in the Historical Context  
of Sixteenth Century Spain*  
Cristóbal Serrán-Pagán y Fuentes, 2018

**POSTMODERN ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY**

*Catholic-Christian Hope for the Dawn of a Postmodern Ecological Civilization Rising from  
within the Spiritual Dark Night of Modern Industrial Civilization*  
Joe Holland, 2017

**JOURNEYS TO RENEWED CONSECRATION**

*Religious Life after Fifty Years of Vatican II*  
Emeka Obiezu, OSA & John Szura, OSA, Editors, 2017

**THE CRUEL ELEVENTH-CENTURY IMPOSITION OF  
WESTERN CLERICAL CELIBACY**

*A Monastic-Inspired Attack on Catholic Episcopal & Clerical Families*  
Joe Holland, 2017

**PETER MAURIN'S  
ECOLOGICAL LAY NEW MONASTICISM**

*A Catholic Green Revolution Developing  
Rural Ecovillages, Urban Houses of Hospitality,  
& Eco-Universities for a New Civilization*  
Joe Holland, 2015

**GLOBAL GOVERNANCE & UNITED NATIONS**

**SEEKING GLOBAL JUSTICE & PEACE**

*Catholic-Inspired NGOs at the United Nations*  
Emeka Obiezu, 2019

**BRETTON WOODS INSTITUTIONS & NEOLIBERALISM**

*Historical Critique of Policies, Structures, & Governance of the International Monetary Fund &  
the World Bank, with Case Studies*  
Mark Wolff, 2018

**PROTECTION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES**

*A Symposium Organized by Pax Romana at the United Nations  
and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations*  
Dean Elizabeth F. Defeis & Peter F. O'Connor, Editors, 2015

**PERSONAL WITNESS STORIES**

**CALLED TO AN  
EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURE  
IN FAITH**

Isabelle Smith, MMM, 2024

**"BETTER FOR BEING WITH YOU"**

*A Philosophy of Care*  
Sister Bernadette Kenny, MMM with Tauna Gulley, 2019

**RUINED FOR LIFE**

*Post-Missionary Immersion, Reintegration, & Conversion*  
David Masters, 2019

**PADRE MIGUEL**

*A Memoir of My Catholic Missionary Experience in Bolivia  
amidst Postcolonial Transformation of Church and State*  
Michael J. Gillgannon, 2018



**FALLING INTO GOD**

*My Lay Catholic journey in spirituality and ministry  
From family and home to Vatican II and the Holy Spirit  
To prophetic work for justice and peace  
Tom Cordaro – 2025*

**WORLD RELIGIONS, ECOLOGY, & COSMOLOGY**

**A HIMALAYAN HOPE  
AND A HIMALAYAN PROMISE**

*India's Spiritual Vision of the Origin, Journey,  
& Destination of Earth's Environment & Humanity  
Thomas Pliske, 2019*

**THE WHOLE STORY**

*The Wedding of Science & Religion  
Norman Carroll, 2018*

**LIGHT, TRUTH, & NATURE**

*Practical Reflections on Vedic Wisdom & Heart-Centered Meditation  
In Seeking a Spiritual Basis for Nature, Science, Evolution, & Ourselves  
Thomas Pliske, 2017*

**THOMAS BERRY IN ITALY**

*Reflections on Spirituality & Sustainability  
Elisabeth M. Ferrero, Editor, 2016*

**SPIRITUAL PATHS TO  
A GLOBAL & ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION**

*Reading the Signs of the Times with Buddhists, Christians, & Muslims  
John Raymaker & Gerald Grudzen, with Joe Holland, 2013*

**THE NEW DIALOGUE OF CIVILIZATIONS**

*A Contribution from Pax Romana  
International Catholic Movement for Intellectual & Cultural Affairs  
(Pax Romana / CMICA-USA)  
Roza Pati & Joe Holland, Editors, 2002*

**INSPIRATIONAL FICTION**

**SUNRISE STORIES & MOONLIGHT TALES**

*From the Mother's Garden  
Thomas Pliske, 2023*



# SSGN

Spirituality & Sustainability Global Network