

# Roman JURIGA

## **Eco-Management as a Necessity for Responsible Caring and Sustainable Living**

This article aims to be an introduction into sustainable living as an attempt to connect and put together two different approaches – the theological and idealistic approach on the one hand and the pragmatic and practical approach on the other. I have divided my present article into three parts – in the first part I try to analyse the main reasons why environmental management is necessary in the various church institutions and church offices as well as elsewhere in the human society or community. In the second part of my article I concentrate on some of the main environmental problems which we cause or which have an impact on our life. Finally, in the third part of the my essay I present different environmental management schemes and management procedures which can help us to eliminate particular problems connected with the natural environment around us or which can help to eliminate several negative impacts which we have on the natural environment surrounding us.

### **Why be Involved in Environmental Management?**

My priest advised me once – several years ago – that whenever I am going to do something I should ask myself beforehand why. I think that asking ourselves this very important and basic question is very relevant especially when we would like to get into something such as the topic of eco-management. Before we start to do this or that action for the natural environment and for sustainable living, we should be absolutely clear why we are going to do it and for what reason and purpose. This clarification could be very important for us at later stages, especially when some more or less serious difficulties arise.

---

Roman JURIGA is from Slovakia. He graduated in Orthodox theology, and he is currently the executive director of the Orthodox Academy in Vilemov, Czech Republic.

I am sure that if we want to and we have to get involved in eco-management and sustainable living, first of all we must ask ourselves a very serious question: why should we do it exactly? My answer is that we should do it for several very important reasons: we should do it because our faith teaches us to preserve and to protect God's creation which we are part of. We should do it because we do love God and we do believe that the World which we live in is loved and created by God. We should do it because we are supposed to love our neighbours and because we should preserve God's creation for them as well as for those who will come long after us.

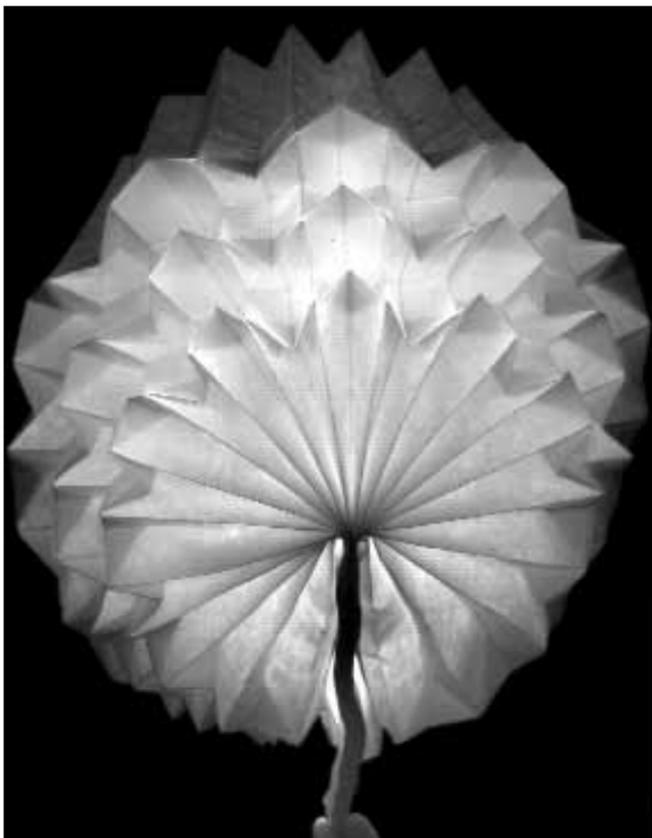
We should do it because we know very well from the Holy Scripture and from our rich Christian tradition that God's creation expects from us care, protection and love as we expect the same care, protection and love from God. We should do it because we keep in mind the picture of human as a good and responsible gardener in God's garden. We should do it because we are witnesses to or even causes of an environmental crisis.

We should do it because we realise gradually that it is our task and not of anyone else's to change something in our behaviour towards nature and natural environment. We should do it because we feel responsible for the state and quality of the world around us. We should do it because we discovered long ago that what is ecological is also economical. We should do it because we realised that environmentally sound solutions can improve people's social situation significantly and all the relations in our communities, too.

### **A Heart of Compassion**

When I was thinking about this question with my friends and colleagues I came to a series of answers which I found very useful especially later – when our Orthodox Academy in Vilemov had to face a serious lack of finances for environmental work or to overcome misunderstandings from priests and pastors or even ecumenical bodies and organisations. It was very important for us to be very clear about our inner motivation if we wanted our environmental management and environmental projects to be continued and developed.

If we clarified and recognised our inner motivations we would perhaps find out that for some of us pragmatic and practical reasoning is sufficient and appropriate – simply motivating enough; while for others a spiritual and more theological inner motivation is absolutely necessary for any change of everyday practice and of environmental management. Some important theologians (e.g. Metropolitan JOHN of Pergamon) who are seriously and committedly involved in theology of creation say that spiritual or rather reli-



gious inner motivation is absolutely necessary and needed as the most important driving force for any change of our behaviour and for a more responsible and sustainable practice towards the natural environment.

This could be very well illustrated by the very fact that many people who travel by plane or who extensively use cars and sometimes build luxurious and environmentally unsustainable houses are aware of the environmental impact of their activities but very few of them are willing to change anything in their behaviour on the basis of their knowledge. I would say that it is quite common to know what environmental problems there are around

us, and how they are caused and how they could be at least partially solved, but there is no serious will to change something in our behaviour or to give up something.

A sensitive heart or a heart of compassion, which Church fathers and poets like St. ISAAC of Syria spoke about, is almost totally missing. An Eastern saying tells us that: "The true wisdom is to practice what we know." However, since the topic of this present article concerns primarily practical environmental solutions and eco-management, I will end the opening and introductory part of my article here and ask my second main question: What are the main environmental problems and what are their impacts on the environment?

### **The Main Environmental Problems Today**

Let us enlist some of the main environmental problems in today's societies as well as their impacts on natural environment. First, air pollution causes greenhouse effect. One of the solutions can be the radical reduction of car and air transport, the radical reduction of the use of fossil energy and energy savings, the committed use of renewable resources, filters and strict norms, the use of bicycles and animals for everyday transport, the use of low-consumption cars, public transport, frequent car free days, the use of renewable fuels for cars (like rapeseed oil or alcohol), energy production in the exact place of its utilisation, the utilisation of biomass waste or cogeneration units.

Water pollution is causes a serious lack of drinking water. Therefore it is highly advisable to use chemical detergents which do not pollute waste water heavily, to use two water systems in every house, using and cleaning at the same time and in the same place, to save drinking water, to preserve wetlands, flooded areas and biodiversity in water basins and catchment areas as far as it is possible, and to protect resources and wells from any pollution.

The deterioration of soil is caused mainly by erosion. We are challenged to use an extensive agricultural system, to use water preserving wetlands, flooded areas, forestry planning, protection and preservation of forests, restoration of natural flows of the rivers and respect natural conditions determined by the position of the water basins and catchment areas.

The effect of a high production of waste materials is the greenhouse effect as well as soil and water pollution. Some of the solutions can be recyclable packages, recycling, purchasing of packages which can be decomposed in an easy and biological way, decomposition of biological wastes, and usage of gas, use of biological wastes for energy production and as natural fertilisers.

Monocultural food production leads to the serious destabilisation of the nature. We must promote biological farming and biodiversity in agriculture, smaller farming units, diversity of production, and purchase of food in the place of production, demonopolizing solutions, combination of agricultural sorts in such a way that one sort protects the other one.

The production of unhealthy food is the effect of the contamination of soil. If we genetically modify food, we will have unhealthy animals and people sooner rather than later. Intensive farming is the clear cause of the overutilisation of soil, of the need for fertilisers, as well as of the overrationalization of production and the almost total elimination of the human element from the process of production. Our answer could be the return of the lands to their original condition, to biodiversity, and to natural meadows.

Noise pollution is the source of stress in the modern human society. We should live closer to the nature and to the natural environment, giving up living in industrial and business centres, being self-sufficient, conducting our business in connection with natural environment and with God. We should create many car-free and noise-free zones in our towns and cities, as well as car-free days and strict standards.

The forced decline of biodiversity leads to the gradual loss of species and natural habitats around us. To solve this significant problem, we can and should create protected areas and we should protect various species; we can change the patterns of our everyday behaviour, we can support sustainable architecture using natural materials, we can leave the church land in our possession to natural meadow wherever possible and we can leave open bell-towers to rare animal species (like owls, predatory birds and bats), having green walls and roofs on our houses.

The mentality of consumerism in society creates a lot of wastes; it creates heavy overproduction and unnecessary transport and – connected to this – dangerous CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. We should think about the real necessity of a product for ourselves, purchasing only the products we really need and we really use, thinking about the origin of the product, ignoring all advertisement materials, as their production is totally unsustainable and it increases the price significantly. We should promote common usage of products and purchase only certain industrial goods, like vehicles, moving machines, one-purpose tools; we should organise flea markets and charity markets, we should use second hand goods, and we should collect goods and toys, old computers, clothes for poor countries and regions of the world.

Overconsumption and overdependence on non-renewable natural resources leads to severe social tensions, bloody wars and depressing

poverty. Wherever possible, we should try small, decentralised and local solutions for securing the supplies of energy, food and water, avoiding the purchase of daily goods from multinational companies, buying locally produced goods. Wherever possible, local or even domestic production of food, energy and other necessities of everyday life should be warmly encouraged. Energy savings, the use and purchase of low-consumption products (like refrigerators, ovens and heaters) should be promoted in a widespread way.

In general, we should avoid buying what we do not need at all. If we buy, we should use completely and fully what we did buy. We should produce ourselves what we really can so that we would not have to buy it from the shops. These three short sentences or golden rules in fact teach us how to think globally and how to act locally at the same time. Both as humankind and as responsible individuals we can ignore and forget our responsibility: then, however, our chance to save the hope of the planet can be completely lost.

### **Glocalisation and Democratura**

It is not our task as committed and concerned Christians just to speak and talk about the catastrophic scenarios for the future in our planet. We can seek ways of changing ourselves first and through such change to change also the things in our human society and civilisation that are not developing in the right direction and could have very unfortunate or even catastrophic consequences for our common world. The idea of transfiguration of humanity and of the cosmos is a very important one for our ways of thinking in this direction and we should be able to keep it in our minds and hearts all the time.

It is necessary, however, to mention in this context also certain examples of non-sustainable human practice as well as sad phenomena that go strictly against a recommended responsible and sustainable environmental practice. These are firstly the phenomenon called glocalisation, which aims to extract and to concentrate all the local resources in the hands of international monopolies, and secondly the phenomenon denoted as democratura, which in practice means that you can say absolutely freely whatever you want, but since you are small and weak and you are not rich enough, your voice would never be heard in the society.

Against these two mentioned phenomena of today's world and society, glocalisation and democratura, we should be able to place two other possible phenomena. The first of these phenomena is the clear motivation for change which I spoke at the beginning of my article about. The second

phenomenon is our strong hope that with God's help, with our joint efforts and with the necessary mutual support, we can and we will overcome not only the earthly powers (or superpowers) and principalities, but also evil spirits and values of selfishness, greed, evil passions, violence and consumerism, which must be replaced by the values of gratitude, humility, sufficiency, justice, love, peace, faith and hope, as David G. HOLMAN rightly wrote in his recently published book *Spiritual Values for Earth Community*. It is high time to take further steps, even only on a small scale first, which might not look like big ecological solutions for the whole world, but which can be decisive, even if their effect is not seen immediately.

I conclude my article with an intriguing story about monkeys. On some islands in the Pacific Ocean, American natural scientists observed an interesting experiment. On one of the islands in the ocean, several monkeys of a particular kind were taught how to clean sweet potatoes, and they slowly learned this practice from one another. At a certain moment (the number of monkeys is said to have been approximately one hundred), all the monkeys on all the remaining islands started to do the same, without ever seeing or learning the practice from somebody.

This example concerns of course the all the natural sciences in the first place and it speaks about various phenomena which we might not be able to explain fully at the given point of time. The thing I would wish for us all, however, is that our joint common work might contribute to a further development of eco-management and of sustainable practice, which with God's help can produce a huge effect that can vastly exceed even our most optimistic expectations.

#### Suggested Reading

HOLMAN David G., *Spiritual Values for Earth Community*.

## Roman JURIGA: Ökogaždálkodás: Felelős gondoskodás az élővilág főnttarthatósága érdekében



Az ökoagaždálkodás a teológiai és idealisztikus, illetve a tapasztalati és gyakorlatias megközelítések egyfajta összefűzését jelenti, abból a célból, hogy megtaláljuk a főnttartható gyakorlat alapjait a mindennapi életben. Kiindulóponlt csakis egy átgondolt indíték szolgálhat a kialakítandó magatartás és cselekvés megtervezéséhez. A motívumok ugyanis igen változatosak: a hittől és meggyőződéstől kezdve, hogy a világot Isten teremtette és tartja főnn szeretetével, illetve hogy megbízatásunk Isten kertjének gondozására szól, egészen addig, hogy tudomásul vesszük a környezeti válság riasztó jeleit, vagy éppen ama tényt, hogy minden ökológiai gond egyben gazdasági gondot is jelent. Soroljuk csak a nehézségeket: víz- és levegőszennyezés, monokulturális élelmiszertermelés, elsivatagosodás, pazarlás, hulladéklerakás és más egyebek; mindezek ellenére képesek vagyunk meglelni a módját annak, hogy csökkentsük a kárt, vagy éppen megoldást találjunk a mégoly szűkös lehetőségeken belül. Mottónk a következő kell, hogy legyen: gondolkodj világméretekben, de cselekedj helyi szinten! A letisztult indíték, remény pedig az, hogy Isten segítségével, valamint közös erőfeszítéssel és egymás kölcsönös támogatásával sikerre vihetjük a főnttartható gyakorlat alkalmazását.

## Roman JURIGA: Ekozarządzanie jako warunek odpowiedzialnej opieki i zrównoważonego życia



Ekozarządzanie jest sposobem na powiązanie dwóch podejść, teologicznego i idealistycznego z praktycznym i pragmatycznym, po to, by znaleźć podstawy dla zrównoważonej praktyki w życiu codziennym. Koniecznym początkiem musi być świadoma motywacja do takiego podejścia i działania. Motywacje różnią się od wiary i przekonania, że świat został stworzony i kochany przez Boga, a my jesteśmy ustanowionymi przez niego ogrodnikami w jego ogrodzie, do alarmującej świadomości kryzysu środowiskowego czy też faktu, że ekologiczny oznacza również ekonomiczny. Jeśli wyodrębnimy problemy, takie jak zanieczyszczenie wody i powietrza, monokulturowa produkcja żywności, odpady i inne, będziemy nadal w stanie znaleźć sposoby zminimalizowania szkody lub wprowadzenia rozwiązań, chociaż na małą skalę. Naszym mottem musi być: „Myśl globalnie, działaj lokalnie“ oraz jasna motywacja i nadzieja, że z Bożą pomocą i wspólnym wysiłkiem oraz wzajemnym wsparciem zdołamy wdrożyć trwałą praktykę.



## **Roman JURIGA: Eko-management jako předpoklad zodpovědné péče a udržitelného života**

Eko-management je cestou jak propojit dva přístupy, přístup teologický a idealistický s přístupem praktickým a pragmatickým, s cílem nalézt základy pro udržitelný způsob konání v každodenním životě. Nezbytným východiskem musí být reflektovaná motivace pro takovýto postoj a jednání. Jednotlivé motivace se mohou lišit, od víry a důvěry v to, že svět je stvořen a milován Bohem a my jsme byli ustaveni správci v Boží zahradě, až po vědomí ekologické krize či faktu, že ekologické znamená též ekonomické. Podíváme-li se na problémy jako znečištění vody, vzduchu, produkce monokultur, problém odpadu a další, budeme většinou schopni též nalézt i způsob jak minimalizovat škody na životním prostředí nebo dokonce najít řešení, přestože třeba jen v malém měřítku. Naším mottem musí být: Myslet globálně a jednat lokálně! S touto jasnou motivací a nadějí, že s Boží pomocí, společným úsilím a vzájemnou podporou v uplatnění udržitelného života uspějeme.



## **Roman JURIGA: Öko-Management als notwendige Voraussetzung für einen verantwortungsvollen und bewussten Lebensstil**

Öko-Management ist eine Methode, sowohl den theologisch-idealistischen als auch den praktisch-pragmatischen Aspekt des täglichen Lebens auf der Suche nach einer Grundlage für einen ausgewogenen Lebensstil zu beachten. Am Anfang sollte die Motivation für diese Haltung und dieses Handeln neu überdacht werden. Die Motivationen sind unterschiedlich, angefangen bei dem festen Glauben, dass die Welt von Gott geschaffen und geliebt ist und dass wir die „Gärtner im Garten Gottes“ sind, bis hin zu der alarmierenden Offensichtlichkeit der näherkommenden Umweltkatastrophe oder der Tatsache das ökologisch auch gleichzeitig ökonomisch bedeuten kann. Wenn wir die Probleme auflisten, z.B. Wasser- und Luftverschmutzung, auf Monokultur basierende Lebensmittelproduktion, Müllproduktion und mehr, so können wir doch immer noch Möglichkeiten finden den Schaden in Grenzen zu halten oder im kleinen Rahmen sogar Lösungen zu finden. Wir sollten nach dem Grundsatz handeln „Denke global, handle lokal!“. Die Motivation und Hoffnung kommen aus der Überzeugung, dass wir mit Gottes Hilfe, Zusammenarbeit und gegenseitiger Unterstützung eine ökologisch vertretbare Lebensweise erfolgreich etablieren können.