

WUCWO General Assembly 2018

1st Panel: *To a world which
thirsts...*

**What is happening to our
common home?**

Topic:

Women and garbage management in sub-Saharan cities: tradition, reality and urgency.

Justification for choosing this topic

Encyclical of Pope Francis: “On care for our common home”

- ▶ “The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament that once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish.” § 21
- ▶ “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change.” §13

Problem

- ▶ **How could we be carriers of living water in the midst of the filth of the world?**

Objectives

- ▶ **Reflect** on the causes of domestic waste production and mismanagement in Africa, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.
- ▶ **Identify** women's activities that produce waste and waste water.
- ▶ **Recover** certain symbols for the development of the feminine role in the fight against environmental degradation and for a spirituality of living water.

PLAN

I- Tradition and realities of the common home in Africa: paradise in perdition...

II- Women and the environment in Africa: producer of waste or in charge of its management?

III- Femininity committed to a healthy and holy environment: things can change...

I- Reality of the common home in Africa: paradise in perdition...

- ▶ And God saw that it was very good...
- ▶ God marvels at His creation. He wanted it not only good, but also beautiful and subject to man...
- ▶ **What did the man do with it?**

Beauty and environmental degradation: vegetation and waste



Cause of waste production

- ▶ **Tradition:** Garbage is usually stored in the inner yard until it is incinerated outdoors. The degradation and management of the environment are closely related, in this case, to the illiteracy of the population and its culture.
- ▶ **Urbanisation and demographics:** With successive waves of mainly rural migrants motivated by immediate survival needs, we are witnessing the creation of spontaneous, unplanned and uncontrolled neighbourhoods. The number of inhabitants is proportional to the amount of garbage, and the mixture of cultures explains the different behaviours in relation to waste management. This generates an ecosystem that is unhealthy for human beings.
- ▶ **Poverty:** The concern to protect the environment is ignored or takes a back seat to the immediate need to solve a health problem.

II- Women and the environment in Africa: producer of waste or in charge of its management?

Activities that produce waste: three types of women

- ▶ **Housewives** (well-being and unhealthiness): they are at the heart of all the activities that produce waste: cooking, cleaning dishes and clothes...
- ▶ **Dyers** (beauty and degradation): two major impacts on the health of the environment: the burning of wood to heat water and chemicals and the pollution of water and soil by rinsing dyed fabrics.
- ▶ **Sellers** (survival and illness): more concerned about the survival of their families, the sellers are not concerned about the care of the environment: all places are good for carrying out their activities. They get along well with plastics and flies...due to land degradation and diseases.

Housewives: well-being and unhealthiness



Dyers



Sellers: survival and illness



III- Femininity committed to a healthy and holy environment: things can change...

▶ **Call to change:**

- ✓ Change in mindset
- ✓ Change in behaviour

➤ **Purpose**

- ❖ For a healthy and holy environment
- ❖ For a sustainable development
- ❖ For a real peace
- **Three symbols: the broom, the gourd, the well**

The symbolism of the broom: cleanliness and protection



- ▶ **The broom** is a sacred and commonly used instrument for African women
- ▶ **The broom** is used to separate waste from everything that is useful and important
- ▶ **The broom** is also associated with spiritual purification: a purification of the person and of the place
- ▶ **The broom** symbolises: cleanliness, protection, purification, non-violence

Women and the symbolism of the broom



- ▶ Like the broom, women are invited to **protect** and **clean** their environment. Their beauty or their other name is "cleanliness"

The symbolism of the gourd: welcome, purification



- ▶ **The gourd** is the main working tool of African women.
- ▶ **The gourd** is vested with spiritual power for African women
- ▶ **The gourd** is used to carry water, cereals, and preserve food
- ▶ **The gourd** symbolises: welcome, conviviality, instrument for purification

Women and the symbolism of the gourd



- ▶ Like the gourd:
 - ❖ Women give their best
 - ❖ Women are carriers of water
 - ❖ Women are containers and communicators
 - ❖ **Their feminine greatness is measured in the welcome of the other and in their ability to make their environment healthy and holy.**

The symbolism of the well: life and interiority (desire for God)



- ▶ **The well** is sacred in all African traditions
- ▶ **The well** represents the synthesis of the three cosmic orders: heaven, earth and hell, and also of the three elements: water, earth and air
- ▶ Because of its deep, vaginal shape and its moist appearance, **the well** is a feminine symbol of abundance and life
- ▶ **The well** symbolises life, secret, concealment, interiority, desire...

The symbolism of Jacob's well: Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, Jn.4:1-42



- ▶ **Meeting place:** encounter of all peoples, believers and non-believers in the God of Abraham...
- ▶ **Source:** source of living water and spring, source of life in fullness and truth
- ▶ **Teaching:** call to conversion and sending out in the mission of proclaiming the Good News

Women and the symbolism of the well: interiority and desire for God



▶ Like the well:

- ❖ Women must cultivate their interiority
- ❖ Women must nurture their spiritual life

➤ Purpose

- ✓ Be both "well and well carer"
- ✓ Go from the material well to the spiritual well
- ✓ Be carrier of water and not producer of waste water

The challenge of the three symbols: the audacity of change

▶ **Waste can be managed in the common home in Africa.**

Change is needed:

▶ **Change to develop:**

✓ A new, committed consciousness

✓ A cultural revolution

✓ A new way of being, acting, living

❖ **And that God, the source of all good and all peace, may be truly desired and adored at any time and in any place in our common home.**

Conclusion

- ▶ **Guide: The problem of garbage in sub-Saharan Africa / "Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well"**
- ✓ The degradation of our common home is not just external
- ✓ The thirst of the world is not only material
- ✓ The waste that floods our environment is not just a physical matter

For a healthy and holy environment, for true and lasting development and peace, it is necessary: to work for the liberation of the feminine genius in the dynamic of a spirituality of living water that purifies, quenches thirst and restores. Therefore, women will see in the simplest of their actions (management of waste or waste water) the human lives that will be affected by that action.

THE END

THANK YOU

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