A Recipe for Environmentalism:

Ecology and the Future of Central Europe: With or Without Life? Central European Sub-Region seminar in Záježová, Slovakia

Márta Sinkó

Take the untouched natural environment; a little, ecological house; some home-made dishes; the local wildlife and add one group of young, Central-European Christians to it, a handful of well-prepared lecturers, and finally fill it with believe and enthusiasm. Now, let’s see, what we can bake from it.

This recipe came to life in Záježová, Slovakia, in the middle of September 2010, with participants coming from Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Latvia and Belarus. As a participant at the conference I would like to offer you a slice of this creation.

Nowadays almost everyone talks about environmental protection and climate change, but it is hard to see any improvements or changes being made. More and more companies support ideas of sustainability but at the same time they continue mass production and with that the production of more waste.

What is the problem? Nature and its current condition interweaves both with the story of creation and the story of the last times. For this reason, young Christians couldn’t miss the chance to meet and discuss in Záježová! The environment is not the same today it once was. What humanity creates is with the help of God, however nature is the God’s direct work, nothing else can give as much energy and feeling towards such a project like God can. We have separated ourselves from this creation. Why don’t we pay more attention to the earth? We need more events, like this seminar, closer to the nature.

Do you think young people can find something to eat in a valley far from the city and shops with no money in their pockets? I say yes; God helps us when we are in need, when we ask. The Slovakian valley’s farmers provided helping hands to the seminar’s participants with great love, giving bread, preserved fruits, eggs - though we can’t forget that the trees also offered their fruits for free without any a voice.

Should we be afraid of walking alone in the forest at night? Do the strange voices of the animals frighten us? Is your answer yes – I ask you why? Walking in the forest at night isn’t any more dangerous than the threat of humans we see riding the train or walking down the street. Animals, even if it is a bear, didn’t eat the forbidden fruit, humans did. God protected the seminar participants through the forest even late into the evening. They returned to the farm in one piece and with the peace that comes with the sounds of the wilderness like the grunting of a nearby deer.

Can young participants really learn and have fun in a little house, far from party venues and schools? Yes, yes, yes! Nature is the most inspirational environment for learning. This is especially true in autumn, when every colour spreads across the valley, like every experience

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over all these years are brought together to prepare for the birth of Jesus. We know, Jesus will come for us at the end of days, and yes, some people now believe that that the end is close, because human’s have contact with the earth. But we have to believe that before this God will give us at least one more chance to survive. We only must look back, gather the experiences, learn from these, make changes and pray together!

Some people blame the Christian legacy for the present day ecological situation, but Christians are only partly responsible, as we are just humans, who are tired, and have to deal with the hands of strangers who block them. By paying attention to God’s message we perceive and understand what we need to do, we cannot rest until we implement this call. We must not forget that “something is going wrong in the world”. What is wrong with the Earth? Pollution, polarisation, overpopulation, deforestation, extinction of species, global warming. Perhaps you ask – OK, but what can we do? With the Lord’s help we can become a sustainable community, which means that we receive from the Father and give to the Father, we give to nature, and receive from it. Sustainability’s secret is an equal degree of reciprocity – that’s all.

So what does the spoils of Záježová’s recipe taste like? Imagine that you are in the middle of the mountainous countryside, far from civilization, in a valley through which a stream gently flows. You stand on the green grass, and pray alone to the Lord. You throw your sins – like stones which feel heavy in your hand – into the stream, and your heart clears, as the stones under the water. Suddenly many people gather around you, creating a perfect circle, and you pray and sing together to God in the fresh air:

   For those who make decisions about the resources of the Earth,
   that we may use your gifts responsibly.

   For those who work on the land and sea, and in industry,
   that they may enjoy the fruits of their labours,
   and marvel at your creation.

   For artists, scientists and visionaries,
   that through their work we may see creation afresh.

   We thank you for giving us life,
   For all who enrich our experience.
   - From the New Zealand Book of Common Prayer

Márta Sinkó, is 22 and from Csongrád, Hungary. Her life has always been connected to the environment because she grew up in the countryside. Márta studied International Relations and is currently studying International Economics at the University of Szeged. She believes environmental problems can’t be solved without international cooperation. Márta got involved with WSCF-E one year ago. In her free time she enjoys folkdance, singing, writing poems, and running. She also enjoys travelling, transmitting Hungarian culture and speaking foreign languages.

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