Spirituality and Global Sustainability: Inquiry and action

Jim (James A.F.) Stoner
Professor of Management Systems and
Chairholder: James A.F. Stoner Chair for Global Sustainability
Fordham University Schools of Business
Agenda

- Focus – Spiritual Leadership for Global Sustainability
- Define Global Sustainability
- Share an observation
- Ask a Question
- Share another observation
- Insights from Dr. Isabel Rimanoczy’s research on leadership for global sustainability
- Exploring the role of spirituality
- Now what?
Observation

- The relationships between spirituality and global sustainability

- Spiritual commitment $\rightarrow$ commitment to global sustainability

- Awareness of global unsustainability $\rightarrow$ spiritual commitment to global sustainability
Spiritual commitment → commitment to global sustainability

- Request: If you know any faith tradition, religion, or form of spirituality that does not include a loud and clear call to care for the planet’s capacity to support our species and other species, please do a one-on-one with me .... I am aware of no such instance and will be grateful to learn of as many such examples as there are.
Awareness of global unsustainability $\rightarrow$ spiritual commitment to global sustainability

- I’ll provide one very recent, and possibly dramatic, example later in the talk
What Do We Mean By Global Sustainability? - 1


Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
Brundtland Commission definition modified:

- Sustainable development \(\rightarrow\) Global Sustainability
- development \(\rightarrow\) a process
- without compromising \(\rightarrow\) while enhancing

**Global Sustainability** is a process that meets the needs of the present generation while enhancing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
Social justice aspect:

Global sustainability involves the creation and maintenance of a world that works for everyone with no one left out.
Preaching to the Choir?

CHOIR: Folks who are deeply and \textit{actively} committed to creating a sustainable world.

CONGREGATION: Folks who are NOT deeply and \textit{actively} committed to creating a sustainable world.
Action: in 8 or fewer words

**CHOIR:** If you are deeply and *actively* committed to creating a sustainable world, please write how you got this commitment.

**CONGREGATION:** If you are NOT deeply and actively committed to creating a sustainable world, please write what would have to happen for you to become committed and *active*? (i.e., what’s missing for you to have that commitment and to act on it?)
Insights on Leadership for Global Sustainability

- 2010 Columbia University Teachers’ College Doctoral Dissertation by Isabel Rimanoczy

- Respondents and research process

- Insights
Insights

- Awareness → Passion → Action

- Awareness – gut more than mind
  “like a punch in the stomach,” “I sat on the bed with my wife and we cried”

- Passion – a call that cannot be ignored
  “I have to do this”, “there is no way not to do this”, “embarrassed to not be doing this”

- Action – converting the call to action
  “Well, let’s just DO something, ANYTHING”
Inquiry

- Role of spirituality in leadership for global sustainability
- But first another observation about the
- The Business case for Global Sustainability
- The Career case for Global Sustainability
- Observation
Observation In Business School Literature and, I assume, Teaching

- Much business case
- Growing career case
- Very little moral, spiritual, ethical case (Maybe Mary Gentile’s *Giving Voice to Values* soon)
  http://www.givingvoicetovaluesthebook.com/
- An absence of moral dialogue
Role of spirituality in leadership for global sustainability

- 13 of 16 appear to have sourced the commitment out of some form of spiritual base
- Not one mention of the business or career cases for global sustainability as a source of the commitment
The Unsustainability → Spirituality Connection:
One recent example

- The September 2011 Jesuit Task Force
  *Special Report on Ecology – Healing a Broken World*

Adding a “new” pillar of Ignatian Spirituality to three frequently cited ones – one non-expert’s interpretation

- A call to add – loudly and clearly – “awareness, passion, and action for global sustainability” to three frequently cited traditional pillars of Ignation spirituality
From Three to Four Pillars of Ignatian Spirituality

- of *cura personalis* (care of the individual person for all peoples),
- *hominis pro aliis* (men and women together for others),
- *magis* (more, i.e., never-ending improvement), and now
- "care for all creation" (healing our planet in socially just ways).
Now what? Possible Congregation actions

AWARENESS:
Do your homework – since there is much evidence that suggests the very survival of our species may be at risk, do you have a moral right to be ignorant or dismissive of the facts that point to that possibility?

….. And welcome passion and action
Now what? Possible Choir actions

**ACTION:**

- KDWYAAD, including
- Acknowledging the validity of the Business and Career Cases for Global Sustainability
- Bringing your inclusive spiritual commitment to Global Sustainability “out of the closet”
- Acknowledging our spirituality-based commitment as THE reason for our commitments and invite others to do so as well
Said Another Way

- Our spiritual traditions call us to care for this planet’s capacity to nourish and support our species – so we are called for that reason alone to do what is right for ourselves and for future generations of our own and other species,

- The Business and Career Cases for Global Sustainability are useful means for doing what is right, but they are only means – not the end – the end is doing what we are called by the best in us to do (called by our spirituality to do).

- We contribute to the world when we re-engage ourselves and others in compassionate, appreciative, and inclusive moral dialogues
Jesuit Values another framing
(courtesy of colleagues and the Regis University web-site)

- cura personalis (care of the individual person),
- homines pro aliis (men and women for and with others)
- magis (more, i.e., never-ending improvement)
- unity of mind and heart
- contemplatives in action