Call for Papers

Laudato si’ and Northern Appalachia:
A Conference on the Environment and Catholic Social Teaching

Friday, October 21, 2016
Saint Vincent College
Latrobe, PA

The past forty years have seen a series of pastoral letters that address the environment and the social conditions of the Appalachian region (This Land is Home to Me [1975]; At Home in the Web of Life [1995]; Laudato si’ [2015]). The conference seeks to foster interdisciplinary reflection on the state of the environment, the people, and the culture of Northern Appalachia in light of Catholic Social Teaching as expressed in all of these documents, but with a special emphasis on the significance of Laudato si’ for the region.

Four areas will structure the conference:

- Theology
- History, Public Policy, and Activism
- Environmental Literature
- Environmental Science

Quality papers will be recommended for inclusion in a special volume of Journal of Moral Theology (http://msmary.edu/College_of_liberal_arts/department-of-theology/journal-of-moral-theology.html). The journal is a peer-reviewed journal focused on Catholic moral theology. It is concerned with contemporary issues as well as deeply rooted tradition of inquiry about the moral life and is indexed in the ATLA Catholic Periodical and Literature Index®, a product of the American Theological Library Association. Journal of Moral Theology is owned by Mount St. Mary’s University.

Proposals of 250 words should be submitted as attachments (.doc or .docx file extensions) to the section conveners via email. Proposals should include name, institution, and contact information (phone, email). Student submissions should be submitted by a faculty sponsor.

Submission Deadline: June 1, 2016

Theology
Convener: Dr. Jessica Wroblewski (Yale); Wheeling Jesuit University jwroblewski@wju.edu

The Theology section invites papers and panels that address the intersections among theology, ecology and the natural sciences and their relationship to the conference theme of Laudato si’ and its relationship to and significance for the region of Northern Appalachia. Below are some of the questions that could be explored:
How might theology and ethics respond to the environmental crises brought about by human power over Earth? Some scientists suggest that the world now has moved into a new geological era, the “Anthropocene,” in which human actions drive changes in the environment. What does this mean for the theology of creation and theological anthropology?

In what ways might the ecological awareness brought about by crisis present an opportunity to rethink or reformulate certain aspects or practices of liturgy/worship?

How ought we to understand the relationships between the Reign of God, Christian discipleship, and care for the environment? How are the particularities of a place (such as northern Appalachia) significant for theological reflection?

History, Activism, and Public Policy
Convener: Dr. William J. Collinge (Yale); Mt. St. Mary's University collinge@msmary.edu

The Activism, History, and Public Policy section welcomes papers that address all aspects of history and public policy related to the people and region of Northern Appalachia. The conference also presents an opportunity to explore how individuals and movements have addressed questions of justice and the environment over the past two centuries. Papers could examine any of the following topics:

- the environment and colonial and pre-colonial periods
- the New Deal or the War on Poverty in the region
- the relationship between social justice and the environment in the Civil Rights Movement, labor movement, Catholic Worker, charismatic renewal, etc.
- the impact of Reformed theology/Calvinism on industry in the region

Environmental Literature
Convener: Dr. Christine Cusick (Duquesne); Seton Hill University cusick@setonhill.edu

The Environmental Literature section seeks papers that focus on the aesthetic value and/or function of selected works of literature, art, and architecture dealing with the people and the environment of Northern Appalachia. In addition to ecocritical readings of regional texts, we would also encourage the submission of paper proposals that explore the re-visioning of traditional aesthetic theories of the beautiful and the sublime in light of environmentalist critiques, or that explore the relationship between culture and environmental preservation. Short creative pieces that give voice to the plight and beauty of the region are also welcome.

Environmental Science
Convener: Br. Albert Gahr, OSB (West Virginia University); Saint Vincent College albert.gahr@stvincent.edu
The Environmental Science section welcomes proposals and abstracts dealing with the environment (including climate change) and especially with an eye to its effects on underserved, minority, and low-income populations. The section encourages proposals that emphasize the relationships between environmental justice (including climate change), human health, and economic development. Generally, these projects will be delivered in poster sessions throughout the conference. If authors would prefer to present their research in the form of a formal paper, this request should be made clearly to the convener. Student and student-faculty poster proposals are strongly encouraged.

All environmental science proposals should include:

- Project statement including a clear statement of discovery questions or issues addressed
- Project type (e.g., survey, field project, etc.)
- How this project relates to environmental justice
- Description of the study location, scientific and analytic methods
- Progress, findings, results, or accomplishments to date
- If the project is ongoing, describe next phase/steps

Logistical concerns and other questions should be directed to Christopher McMahon, the conference coordinator, at christopher.mcmahon@stvincent.edu or at 724-805-2841.

For registration and other details visit the conference website: http://www.stvincent.edu/theology/