

# GMU Certificate Program in Creation Spirituality and Environmental Justice

Global Ministries University will provide professional training for those involved in promoting care for our common home, Mother Earth, and award a professional certificate in environmental justice for those completing the program over one year to eighteen months. Courses will involve study of Pope Francis' seminal document, *Laudato Si'*, and lectures by specialists in the fields of climate justice and creation spirituality. Participants will study and discuss an interfaith understanding of nature-derived spirituality as first developed by Native peoples in Africa, Asia and Latin America. They will explore the role of the arts in approaching nature from a contemplative perspective rather than the exploitative model that has led to the present environmental crisis. Finally, students will learn sustainable strategies to heal Mother Earth, and to develop rituals that can become part of the spiritual communities in which they are members. Each student will be assigned a mentor who will assist them in designing an environmental education project for a school, neighborhood or faith-based organization. Implementation of the project and identification of the participants and sponsoring group or organization will comprise the capstone course for this professional certificate program.

The cost of this program is the same as a professional certificate: \$2,550. The timeline will be 12 to 18 months. A \$250 deposit is required in addition to the application fee of \$25.

**Environmental justice** is the principle that all people are entitled to equal environmental protection regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. In many cases, minority communities, the poor and people on the margins of society are disproportionately exposed to environmental threats that reduce their quality of life and their physical and psychological health. Goals of environmental justice include reducing the disparities that exist for minority and poor communities in achieving a safe and healthy environment. Flint, Michigan, is an example of a poor community disproportionately affected by health hazards in its water supply. Showing the connection between environmental health hazards, poor health and economic inequality found in minority and immigrant communities, the present health data for those affected by the coronavirus indicate that communities of color and lower income are disproportionately affected by the virus.

*Laudato Si'*: In this document, Pope Francis shows that the health of human beings and all living species is affected negatively by the impact of atmospheric pollutants, exposure to solid waste products, toxic chemicals, and lax environmental standards. The roots of the environmental justice movement go back to the civil rights movement of the 1960's. The Memphis Sanitation Strike drew the support of the Reverent Martin Luther King. The growth of the environmental

movement was highlighted with the annual celebration of Earth Day beginning in 1970. April 22, 2020 marks the 50th anniversary of this annual event.

**Principles of Environmental Justice:** 1) An affirmation of the sacredness of the earth 2) A demand for non-discriminatory public policies 3) The right for victims of environmental injustice to full compensation and reparations for damages 4) The right for all to “ethical, balanced and responsible use of land [and] renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for all humans and other living beings.”

For more information on Environmental Justice see the [National Catholic Reporter Earthbeat for April 3-16, 2020.](#)

The Certificate Program will be tailored to the student’s needs and can include but is not limited to the following courses:

TH509 Ecological Theology

TH516 Evolutionary Theology

TH517 Spiritual Ecology

TH542 Empowered by the Living Light

TH575 Mysticism in Christian Tradition

TH580 Creation Spirituality

TH646 Journey Into the Spiritual Center

TH702 Non-Violence - Spirituality, Theory and Practice

DR913 Art & Mysticism