

The Catholic Women’s League of Canada

Diocese of Edmonton

Vatican seminar on water pushes for better public policies

Father Peter Hughes, who has worked all his life in Peru, in the Andes and in the Amazon explains he is currently involved in a new project in defense of the Amazon region – the Pan Amazon – which comprises nine geographical countries.

“We are very much aware that the life of the Amazon is now in real danger; the life of so many indigenous communities, their lands that are being taken over and destroyed by the onslaught of mining and oil companies and the destruction of the rainforest for the so-called timber industry” he said.

Hughes says all this is also to be taken into consideration in relation to the question of climate.

He says the destruction and the depredation of the Amazon is destroying the equilibrium of world climate.

“One fifth of the world’s water supply comes from the Amazon; another fifth of the drinking water of the world comes from the Amazon, and it’s now true to say that twenty percent of the Amazon has now been irrevocably destroyed. So the question is: can we, the human family, have the political will to stop the accelerated rate of destruction?” he said. If not, he says, we are in deeper trouble.

Regarding the Vatican seminar which focuses on water, Hughes says everybody is aware that “the bottom line of life in all its manifestations is the need for water” He said the need for water has become crucial in a world where water not only is scarce, “but is being denied as a human right, as a basic right for life to too many people”. Hughes says this is due to a number of factors, one of which is that water has been transformed into something with market value. “This takes away from water as something that has something to do with a fundamental human right and the common good” he said. He pointed out that it is increasingly a subject of conflict and violence between peoples and between nations. He says neighboring communities who have lived in relative peace and harmony over the ages are now, because of the scarcity of water, are entering conflictual relationships. “These are some of the questions we are trying to address, he said, pointing out that water has to do with politics, with economics, with culture, with education.”

It is also a very sacred issue, Hughes concludes: “the religious dimension in relation to water is founded in all the great religious traditions, particularly in the Christian and Catholic tradition that a lot of us come from and a lot of are engaged in”.

(from Vatican Radio)