



Connecting peace, ecology and justice from the Gospel perspective

2011 International Year of the Forests

September 2011

Co-ordinator's Comments

The concept of growth should be about the continuous cycle of life, about flourishing communities of people, plants and animals, and about every species growing into the fullness of being - into the Reign of God. This understanding involves spiritual growth that puts us humans in our proper place – not one of domination, but of right relationship with God and all of creation!

However, the prevailing concept of growth is evidenced in the linear global economic system. Corporations are said to be growing if they have ever-increasing profits. Politicians talk about Australia as a “growth economy”. What they really mean is we are taking more and more minerals from our ground to sell overseas. Growth of cities means more loss of flora, fauna and food-producing land. This growth is built on the backs of the poor. Scientists call this period of exploitation of the earth's natural resources, the **Anthropocene**. They say that we are living in a “man-made” geologic epoch (See *A Report by the Working Group Commissioned by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences*

www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/acds/cien/2011/PAS_Glacier_110511_final.pdf It is plainly obvious that the earth and all in it cannot survive if this view of growth continues.

What We've Been Up To

■ New Volunteer

We welcome **Sr Kateia Kai Kai** ssm recent arrival from Kiribati, who volunteers with us two days a week.

■ Faith Ecology Network (FEN)

FEN is involved in two upcoming events:

9 October “Environmental Ethics” Multi-faith Forum put on by the **Hindu Council of Australia**, in partnership with **ARRCC, FEN and UWS Multi-faith Chaplaincy at the University of Western Sydney.**

23 October: The Ecology of Forests – An Enrichment Day at Santi Forest Buddhist Monastery, Bundanoon for FEN members and those interested in FEN. Call us for inquiries about both events. 02 93528021

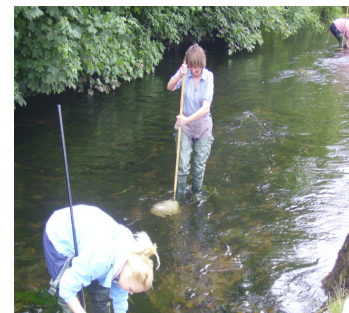
■ Ireland Summer School

With **Fr Pat O'Shea** I was privileged to represent the ANZ region with other Columbans in the Summer School of the MA Ecology and Religion Course.

www.allhallows.ie/ The course explores how religions can make connections between the health of the planet and the well-being of all creatures. The first week in the Burren in County Clare, was led by **Dr John Feehan**, retired Senior Lecturer, School of Biology and Environmental Science, University College Dublin. His book *“The Singing Heart of the World: Creation, Evolution and Faith”* is recommended reading. John teaches that science and religion are two arms of the same encounter with Who or What we name as God! They need to inform each other. In this wildly beautiful area we did just this as we studied up close some of the geology, archeology, wildflowers and tiny aquatic creatures. My eyes were opened to just a small fraction more of the incredibly complex LIFE around us.



Paul Glynn



Anne Lanyon
collecting specimens

In the second week, led by **Sean McDonagh** ssc and **Karl Gaspar** CSsR (from the Philippines) we dealt with some of the major issues affecting us: climate change, loss of biodiversity, water, population, and extractive industries in the context of living and spreading the Gospel of Jesus in an era of the New Story of Creation.

Anne Lanyon

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Growth and Peace-Making

Global population growth (10 billion by 2050) combined with rapid increase in mega-cities provides fuel for conflict (70% of people will live in urban areas by 2050). <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=104859>

The recent riots in England remind us how quickly mob violence can spread. It is imperative that we actively work for peace with justice.

The Church and the Nuclear Question

Archbishop Chullikatt, the permanent observer to the Holy See of the UN said recently: *New attention is being paid to the unresolved problem of 20,000 nuclear weapons, located at 111 sites in 14 countries. More than half the populations of the world live in a nuclear-armed country. Each year, nations spend US\$111bn on maintaining and modernizing their nuclear arsenals.* He reinforced the Vatican's opposition to the spending of resources on nuclear arsenals instead of on the needy poor, calling it sinful. He questioned the legitimacy of nuclear reactors in relation to seismic risk, dismantling and clean-up. *Zenit July 23, 2011* www.zenit.org

Cluster Bombs Bill

Parliamentarians often vote on bills without adequate education on what they are passing into law. The **Cluster Munitions Prohibitions Bill** is meant to enforce domestically the 2008 International Convention signed by Australia and 107 countries to ban the use, transfer, and stockpiling of cluster bombs which kill and maim innocent civilians. However, the draft has introduced exceptions to the ban, which would allow Australian troops to enable future use of cluster munitions by allies that have not joined the convention, eg the USA. Alert citizens have been phoning Senators to caution them that this is not permitted under the Convention. Add your voice to theirs in the next two weeks. www.stopclustermunitions.org

Australian Campaign to Ban Uranium Weapons

This campaign calls on the Australian Government to:

- Support future international resolutions and treaties to ban uranium weapons,
- Ban Australian use of uranium weapons and military action in conjunction with nations that use them,
- Investigate whether Australian uranium exports are being used in weaponry.

Late in 2011, two members will travel to Iraq to investigate the impact of uranium weapons on the city of **Fallujah**. Since US attacks there in 2005 the level of babies born with severe birth deformities has skyrocketed. A recent report "*Cancer, Infant Mortality and Birth Sex-Ratio in Fallujah, Iraq 2005-2009*", found a thirty-eight fold increase in leukaemia www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/7/7/2828/pdf

This shocking story has barely made it on to the radar of the Australian or U.S media. The aim of the trip is to gather information to raise awareness of the issue and give voice to the families of Fallujah through publications and a documentary. <http://acbuw.org/>

New Encyclopedia of Peace

This resource is suitable for high schools and universities to add to their peace studies library. *"Finding peaceful solutions to the world's increasingly complex problems will be a huge task, which must also be based upon knowledge, experience and research. I hope that this important new Encyclopedia will reach a global lay audience as well as policy makers and academic experts and encourage many thousands of readers to study further and work harder for the peace on which our whole future depends."* His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. www.oup.com/

Distance Education Program

Duquesne University, Pennsylvania, USA offers a **Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation** distance-education program to those involved in ministry. It encompasses social analysis, conflict resolution, peace, justice, and the integrity of creation. www.duq.edu/jpic/

Pax Christi Bethlehem Advent Peace Project

Pax Christi UK has developed a project aiming to:

- Encourage prayer and reflection on the coming of the Prince of Peace at Christmas
- Raise awareness that Bethlehem is a living place today, its people in need of prayer and support. The kit uses a crib set made from olive wood. It includes a Powerpoint about Bethlehem today, prayer ideas, links to websites about support for the people of Bethlehem, and ways to continue to work for peace in the New Year. Though it is set in the UK, it is easily adaptable to Australia. Available from www.paxchristi.org.uk

The Culture of Peace Wears the Clothes of Justice

The clothes of justice are woven with patience and compassion, the help of the Master Weaver. The color of each thread is vibrant in its own right but together the threads take on the radiant glow of wholeness. Each color has what it needs to be strong and healthy and completely itself. Because they live side by side woven together in harmony, they enrich the beauty of each other. The clothes made of this fabric drape easily on the Body of Christ.

Master Weaver, we ask for your patience, compassion and imagination as we seek to weave with you the clothes of justice and create a culture of peace.

Columban Mission Education
www.columban.org/missioned

Ecology - Growth, Belonging and Community

Science of Ecology- The science of ecology helps us to understand ourselves within a wider world of plants, animals, bacteria and rocks. It also alerts us to the impact our actions can have on these world systems. We are led to respect the scientists who have *broadened our awareness of nature's systems* and learn to make informed judgments about the choices we make as individual and societies.

Ecology studies the *relations of living things to each other and their natural environment*. It looks at populations of individual species and their changing state as parts of wider systems. Each species relate within larger and layered organizations interacting within an integrated whole in a dynamic way. This system is greater than the summation of its individual parts and mutually beneficial. Multiple eco-systems also have impacts beyond themselves that affect things from the soil's biology to climate patterns.

Ecological Prophets – We are blessed in Australia to have many eco-groups which help us experience ecological diversity as an entry point to an intellectual understanding of nature. *Permaculture was started in Tasmania* by **Bill Mollison** as a way of planning for sustainable productivity that respects earth systems. Discovering 'edge' helps designers work with nature's way of productivity by enhancing the patterns of bio-diversity. Rather than a focus on 'tooth and claw' competition, understanding 'edge' affirms the power of interaction for mutual benefit.

Community gardens are another easily accessible way of *experiencing the benefits of ecological diversity*. By joining a local garden group to dig into soil made richness and healthy by systems bugs and carbon and by sowing a multiplicity of vegetable varieties we learn that diversity enhances life while uniformity limits life. Involvement in a community garden also adds a human factor to our experience. The well-educated as well as the poorly educated cooperate, people learn from each other in the flowering of a human enterprise. Added to this is the fact that community gardens often draw their members from a multi-cultural base. They experience a mutual benefit not only in the act of gardening itself but in the people who work in it. In a further dynamic of growth, community gardens often develop food collectives and support farmers markets.

Ecological Advocates – Introducing genetic modification (*GM*) into the human food chain is controversial. Justice is at stake when farming is controlled by seed companies misusing patenting laws to spread their biotech products. Freedom is at stake when consumers are denied a choice in what they buy

because of inadequate labeling. Bio-diversity is at stake when mono-cropping diminishes nature's gene pool. GM has little-researched implications for human health, the focus of the mother's group *MADGE* concerned about what their children eat. www.madge.org

Gene Ethics is a lobby group allied with other groups concerned about unproven GM claims of safety. They lobby the three levels of government to limit the spread of GM in the food chain. Its concerns are similar to those of MADGE but Gene Ethics knows that ultimately *it is the law that matters*. www.genethics.org The negative impact of international agreements on patents and intellectual properties (TRIPS), which Australia has signed, means that Australia opens itself to ecological risks and control of the local food chain by international biotech companies. AFTINET is a group which focuses on this specific aspect. www.aftinet.org.au

Diversity and Trinity God – The early church experienced the way God acts as diverse. It came to express this in the theological explanation of the Trinity, One God, Three Persons. Within God's own self we understand philosophically there is a *community of relationships* among the persons. This is powerfully expressed in Orthodox religious art. *The Trinity for Beginners* by **Neil Ormerod** was recently published to prime our memory of this teaching. See www.stpauls.com.au/reviews/4745

In relationship to the world we see the one God as creating, liberating and an abiding spirit. This is an ongoing relationship where God is constantly acting to affirm life but where we have to play our part. **Denis Edwards** in *Exploring a Christian Ecological Approach* and other writings reminds us that we do God no service by looking for constant divine interventions. God has built into nature itself most of what we are called to understand as *a gift of God given embedded wisdom*. Our teaching on the value of matter itself is at the heart of incarnational theology and opens us to learn from earth. This makes us deeply grateful for the ongoing research of ecologists to explore earth's wonders and remind us of the power of words like *community, relationship and mutuality*.

See www.compassreview.org/summer10/7.pdf

Ecological Lies – Recent reports in newspapers on the speakers and crowds rallying against a carbon Tax in Canberra are very saddening. So much of the rhetoric was hate filled and based on lies. Just as the Gospel of John reveals how the Jewish religious establishment closed its mind to the message of Jesus, a truthful debate on climate change seems beyond many Australian leaders in politics, business, unions and the mass media.

Charles Rue

Alternatives to the “Growth Economy”

A recent study done in preparation for the upcoming Australian tax summit showed that the gap between rich and poor is more than most people believed: the best-off 20% have 60% of the wealth and the worst-off 20% have only 1% of our national wealth. (*Peter Martin, Sydney Morning Herald 29th August 2011*). The economic system we have is exploitative and benefiting an elite few, even in Australia. This is clearly unjust. A number of economists are seeking alternative models:

1. *The International Society for Ecological Economics*

This is a not-for-profit, member-governed, organization dedicated to advancing understanding of the relationships among ecological, social, and economic systems for the mutual well-being of nature and people. www.ecoeco.org/content/

2. *Centre for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy*

This is an international organization with offices in each continent that promote a steady state economy. <http://steadystate.org>

3. *The New Green Deal Group*

A project of the New Economics Foundation, its membership reflects a range of expertise relating to the current financial, energy and environmental crises. www.neweconomics.org/ **Ann Pettifor**, a fellow of the Foundation, is currently on a speaking tour of Australia. For reports contact Catalyst Australia www.catalyst.org.au/catalyst/

4. *Partnership for Global Justice* is a network of religious congregations, other groups and individuals grounded in Gospel values, committed to develop a global consciousness through educational programs, advocacy and participation with the United Nations. On Sept 10th and Oct 8th, there will be webcast workshops on Global Economics which will address the current economic crisis through the lens of Christian ethics and principles.

These principles will then be applied to issues that are being discussed as part of the economic agenda including trade, debt, multinational corporations, development and subsidies. There will be an emphasis on bridging the gap between those who live in plenty and those who live in poverty. For more information see www.partnershipforglobaljustice.com/

Vulture Fund Campaign

Jubilee Australia's campaign seeks to put an end to the practices of 'Vulture Funds'. Vulture funds are private investment firms that prey on the world's poorest countries.

These commercial bankers circle developing countries on the lookout for debts that the country is struggling to repay. Then they swoop down, purchase the debt on the secondary market for a cheap price, and sue the poor country to recover the full value of the debt, plus interest, penalties and legal fees. This happened to the Democratic Republic of Congo. This greed undermines Jubilee's international debt relief initiatives and, without legislation to prevent it, these vulture funds are free to profiteer from poor country debts in courts around the world, including in Australia. To find out more and consider how you can help, visit: www.jubileeaustralia.org/page/work/stop-debt-vultures

Speaking the Truth to Mining Company Power

When machines began exploratory drilling near two villages in Midsalip, Southern Philippines, October 2010, the vigilant local community set up a picket to stop it. In spite of top-level recognition that the area was crucial ecologically (a Key Biodiversity Area) and socially, corrupt officials had joined with mining companies to ensure that mining applications were approved. Columbans, **Frank Nally** and **Sean Martin**, as well as other priests and religious sisters, have been strongly involved in community non-violent resistance to this invasion. They took their case to the Supreme Court which has just pronounced a stop to the mining because of its negative impact on the environment, the Subanen people and their Sacred Land. **Anne Lanyon**

In 1990 **Pope John Paul II** chose the environment as the subject matter for his World Day of Peace Message – *Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility*. He was the first Pope to explicitly deal with environmental concerns confronting the world, grounding his teaching in the Genesis understanding of the stewardship given to all humanity. He points out that economic justice, ecological concerns and a just share of the world's resources are not only interconnected but intimately entwined. Little or no progress will be made on any one of the three unless the other two are attended to as well. This observation expresses the above concerns more succinctly: *“Postmodernism says there is no framing story. What is right for you may not be right for me. Truth is relative. The problem with that ideology is that, as the global village becomes ever smaller and we all realise how much our lives are interlinked, what is right for me also becomes right for you. [For example] climate change is a challenge to postmodernism ... if we are to ultimately survive as a species, we have no choice but to have a framing story that says we have to manage our resources better and look after the planet.”* Nils von Kalm - www.soulthoughts.com **Jack Evans**