

## ***Climate Change – Mapping an Australian Catholic Response***

Rev Dr Charles Rue, March 2008<sup>1</sup>

'Climate Change' is on many people's lips. Scientific logic has convinced some that it is largely human-induced while others have been shocked into reflection by fickle weather conditions ranging from hurricane Katrina in New Orleans to an Australia-wide ten year drought. There is plenty of information out there for those *with ears to hear*. Australian voters seem to be taking notice. They voted out the Liberal government under John Howard late 2007, ignoring promises of more dollars in their pockets to press for leadership on climate change and the nation's future; however, voters have put the new Labour government under Mr. Rudd on notice to act urgently in forging a carbon neutral future for Australia. The peak and decline of world oil production is yet another factor that will radically alter life as we know it. Again, long-term economic and social-political analysis is there for those *with ears to hear*.<sup>2</sup>

What can the churches add? In the first place, Christian beliefs can help people to identify the central values they bring to the climate change issue, and second, faith can make it possible for people to confront the necessary changes to their individual and community ways. Faith based learning and motivation can help Catholics make a four part response to climate change: to be *Truth Tellers, Spiritual Visionaries, Just and Compassionate People and Social Activists*. This is missionary activity for our age.

Ultimately Catholics need to cooperate with others on the climate challenge at a deep level, but immediately they must strive to get the Church's own house in order. The following points summarise some ways of look at Catholic thinking and acting on climate change.

1. Prayer at every stage of a Catholic missionary response to Climate Change
2. Respond systematically, using the See-Judge-Act model

### SEE

3. Evidence for Climate Change
4. Severity of Climate Change Impacts in Australia
5. Three seminal Australian Books on Climate Change

### JUDGE

6. Traditional Resources help in making a Catholic Response
7. New Interpretations of Scripture
8. Catholic Environmental Ethical Principles
9. Morally Questionable Solutions to Climate Change
10. Examples of Church Institutional Choices showing Moral Integrity
11. Identification of Key Sectors for Individual and Community Action

### ACT

12. Learn the Language of Climate Change for Informed Judgment and Action
13. Being fearless climate change Truth-Tellers
14. Fostering Government Leadership in Action on Climate Change
15. Deepen Catholic faith and its Evangelizing Mission by Response to Climate Change
16. Conclusion and the Climate Change Prayer

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<sup>2</sup> Sean McDonagh Climate Change Columban Press 2007 pp 137-151; [www.lifeaftertheoilcrash.net](http://www.lifeaftertheoilcrash.net)

## **Prayer at every stage of a Catholic Missionary Response to Climate Change**

Prayer is at the heart of Catholic life. It is about talking with God individually and as a community, listening as well as petitioning when considering climate change. Every style of prayer comes into play. For example, when scientists detail the emerging climate problem, prayers of gratitude for the scientists as truth-telling messengers of God are right and proper. Prayers in awe of the great mysteries revealed in Earth systems and our place in its Story follow naturally, as do prayers of humility, asking God that we accept our place in this community called Earth. Prayers asking forgiveness are needed for us to own up to our arrogant deafness and presumptuous lifestyles in order to become aware of their negative effects on Earth's systems. Prayers for the courage to change our ways follow.

It soon becomes obvious that the full gambit of prayers leads us to *visit anew the virtues* – wisdom, prudence, humility, fortitude. They speak of values which easily relate to issues surrounding climate change and further focus prayer. To consider climate change can add meat to our prayer. ('Substance' might be a better word considering the use of meat in our diet has become problematic as its production has a sevenfold higher carbon output compared to a vegetarian diet.)

When considering climate change, *prayers of compassion* are significant – compassion for human victims who lose their livelihoods and even their island homes; compassion for people who have been seduced by 'the Australian dream' based on current economic models of profligate fossil fuel use. These people are experiencing the full range of emotions outlined by Dr Kubler Ross when faced with trauma – denial, anger, fear, bargaining.

Something new for many people is prayer of *compassion for Earth herself*. She is being precipitously pushed into a new stage of evolution and losing millions of her species, 'and Jesus wept' for his Father's creation. Pope John Paul II often spoke of compassion for Earth and wrote in his 1990 Peace Day Message:

*in a profound sense the earth is suffering (Hos 4:3) and the greenhouse effect has now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs ... the resulting meteorological and atmospheric changes range from damage to health to the possible future submersion of low-lying lands. He continued, no peaceful society can afford to neglect either respect for life or the fact that there is an integrity to creation.*

In a 2000 joint statement with the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, John Paul II again wrote about *earth's suffering*. Father Brendan Byrne SJ explores Romans chapter 8 with an eco-justice hermeneutic and puts the text squarely within Catholic prayer life.<sup>3</sup> The text shows that humans and earth share a common fate. Earth not only has a personality but is 'subjected to futility entirely against its will' and awaits transformation when humanity is converted and reborn. When St Francis of Assisi showed respect and particularly 'courtesy' towards nature, he showed examples of genuine prayers of compassion for Earth as brother and sister.

The new missionary task of Catholics in making a response to climate change must begin with prayers of guidance from the Holy Spirit. Mission is primarily the work of the Spirit.<sup>4</sup> The late Popes Paul VI and John Paul II both put dialogue at the centre of how mission is to be done.

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<sup>3</sup> Brendan Byrne, 'Creation Groaning: An Earth Bible Reading of Romans 8:18-22' Norman Habel ed. *Readings from the Perspective of Earth* Sheffield Academic Press 2000.

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Mission of the Redeemer* 1990, No. 21.

At the same time as Catholics witness to what has done in the tradition and in their own lives, they listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through world events and modern people's movements. The emergence of both the environmental movement and climate change are examples of the Spirit speaking. Catholic prayer is needed for a listening and discerning heart, and for the humility to learn and make cooperative responses with all peoples. Pope John Paul II insisted that dialogue and cooperation are not some missionary ploy but a *Spirit given opportunity for both sides to learn and grow*.<sup>5</sup>

Catholics are blessed by the gift of faith, and their missionary task in the world as individuals and church communities is to witness to God's reign; to be in service of the big plan of God. Even the phrase 'reign of God' needs to be unpacked in different ways in each age and culture. The traditional phrases of 'epiphany' (manifestation of God) and 'Emmanuel' (God with us) resonate better with many people in these times than do images of kingship. Some pray that their *missionary efforts may announce and help bring about the dream of God*.

### **Need for a Systematic Response and the See-Judge-Act model**

Systems matter. Climate change is being caused by a breakdown of *Earth's temperature regulation system*. When Earth's climate systems create a hurricane or cyclone to redistribute heat away from the tropical oceans she is merely cooling herself. The fact that cities like New Orleans or Darwin lie in the way is not Earth's fault. Humanity's *systematic use of fossil fuels* under modern economic systems has caused Earth to heat up. And business managers are just being logical when they use the cheapest means of energy available in a systematic way. So, in understanding climate change systems, and exposing modern economic systems that led to our lifestyle choices as the main cause of climate change, a *Catholic response must be equally systematic*.

A systematic Catholic response to human induced climate change could model itself on the *See-Judge-Act* method created by Joseph Cardijn for Young Christian Workers (YCW) in the early 1900's to bring the light of faith to their industrial work situation. Workers were to be become *conscious of being responsible* within their own situation to use the later words of Pope John XXIII in his 1961 encyclical *Mater and Magistra*. He wrote of the need for analysis to reduce social principles to practice, but warned that analysis was not to lead to paralysis. John Paul II wrote about analysis of the reality of *structural sin* and *structural evil* as an enlightened basis for effective action. The federation of Latin American Bishops' conferences, 1968-2007, Medellin to Aparecida, reaffirmed their preference for the pastoral model of *action reflection*. Their communities make up nearly half the world's Catholics and their method of *Praxis = reality/response dialectic* is known and used as a version of See-Judge-Act. Working in Africa, this method of response is called the *Pastoral Cycle* by Jesuit Father Peter Herriot. In 2007 Caritas International used the Cardijn way as a model for a Catholic response to the Millennium goals of the United Nations (UN).<sup>6</sup> However, the strongest endorsement for this systematic approach remains the Second Vatican Council's *Church in the Modern World* in Nos. 1, 10-11 and 43.<sup>7</sup> It called church communities to begin from the world's agenda and

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<sup>5</sup> John Paul II, *Mission of the Redeemer* 1990, No. 56-58

<sup>6</sup> Caritas International, 'Breaking with Business as Usual: Achieving the Millennium Goals', 26.03.07, [www.caritas.org](http://www.caritas.org)

<sup>7</sup> *The People of God believe that it is led by the Lord's Spirit, Who fills the earth. Motivated by this faith, it Labours to decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires in which this People has a part along with other men of our age. For faith throws a new light (see) on everything, manifests God's design (judge) for man's total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human (act). No 11.*

cooperate in finding solutions to major problems of the modern world in the light of faith. Importantly for Australia so proximate to Asia, the document in its 'method, spirit, and vision finds resonance among Asians'.<sup>8</sup> It expresses the heart of the Cardijn way.

Columban Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) work has used social analysis since the 1970's as a way of amplifying the See-Judge-Act method. The Loyola Institute 2007 in Sydney has reaffirmed this method and its usefulness in Australia.<sup>9</sup>

**SEE**

### **Evidence for Climate Change**

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), working within the UN Framework on Climate Change, is the most widely accepted authoritative body reporting on the science and politically possible responses by governments. It names humanity as the prime agent in inducing climate change by its ever increasing use of fossil fuels beginning with the industrial revolution. The IPCC published four major Reports in 1990, 1995, 2001 and 2007, plus specific reports on issues such as 'Carbon Capture and Storage'. The format regularly used by the IPCC gives three summaries which look at 1/ the physical science, 2/ impacts, adaptation and vulnerability, and 3/ mitigation.<sup>10</sup> Its conclusions carry ever increasing levels of certainty, the highest that science can give in many cases at 95%. By definition, the scientific method can never give a 100% certainty. This can be confusing for many media reporters and their readers. A false idea of 'balance' in reporting has often hidden both the degree of certainty and the required urgency in addressing climate change. This same problem about 'balance' can appear in some church documents, like the one on climate by the US bishops.<sup>11</sup>

Some general knowledge of climate systems and how they work is a starting point for Catholics pursuing the virtue of knowledge. The IPCC reports are but the latest in a line of authoritative reviews on climate change published since the 1960s. The first was given to USA President Johnston. Recent climate change debate takes place within wider frames such as the Rio Agreement 1992, Kyoto Protocol 1996 and a new round of IPCC negotiations scheduled for 2012. Significantly the leading emitters of greenhouse gases per person (per capita), the USA and Australia, did not sign Kyoto. It was a major cause of the Howard government's huge electoral defeat in Australia November 2007. Voters were not fooled even when the government claimed it was ahead of Kyoto emission targets for Australia because it counted less land-clearing as a credit. This one-off fudge, created at the expense of land owners, has not let Australia off the hook in claiming action on climate change. The new Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, immediately ratified the Protocol at the 2007 IPCC meeting in Bali. It is important to note, however, that by ratifying the Rio agreement in 1992 all signatories, including the USA and Australia, committed themselves *not to environmentally harm other nations*. All governments are aware of the facts and dire predictions of the consequences of

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<sup>8</sup> Felix Wilfred, 'Asian Christianity and Modernity: Forty Years after Gaudium et Spes', *East Asian Pastoral Review* 42 (2005) 1/2.

<sup>9</sup> Sandie Cornish *Analysis* Easter 2007 [www.loyola.org.au](http://www.loyola.org.au)

<sup>10</sup> [www.ipcc.ch](http://www.ipcc.ch)

<sup>11</sup> United States Catholic Bishops *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good* June 2001, revised 2007 [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

climate change on the whole world, its peoples and biosphere, and the urgent need to respond in substantial ways. Catholics too need to be aware.

Australian data on climate change abounds even though its government, at all three levels, often does not listen to its own scientists. Government Greenhouse and Metrological websites are excellent sources.<sup>12</sup> The Federally funded science body, the CSIRO, focuses on pure research and development of new technologies. Individual state web sites carry more localized information. All these bodies detail both problems and solutions, and work from the three major IPCC scenarios of 2, 4, and 6 degree temperature rises. A two degree rise seems inevitable and its consequences will be bad enough: it will be a different world. Rises of 4 or 6 degrees will be catastrophic.<sup>13</sup> Government bodies name the achievable outcomes as reducing greenhouse gas emissions 20% by 2020 and 60% by 2050. Becoming carbon neutral is optimal; that is 'zero emissions'.

In addition to government bodies, business groups and NGOs host many studies and websites. They add economic and community perspectives which are often less developed by the government agencies. They also conduct education campaigns for change, and because of their flexible nature, often contain more up to date material.<sup>14</sup>

### **Climate Change Impacts in Australia Severe**

The impacts of climate change in Australia have already begun and will be very severe even under the best IPCC scenario of a 2 degree rise. Part of SEEing is to be aware of the various scenarios. It is of note that impacts will vary from region to region so that local impacts will be greater than Australian averages. As an island, Australia has quite distinct climate zones from tropical north, arid inland, temperate east coasts to Mediterranean southern coast. It is subject both to cyclones and blizzards, with rainfall variations from once in ten years to over two meters a year. Australia also has responsibilities for a long coastline, continental shelf, remote ocean islands and a large section of the Antarctic under UN mandate. Already temperature changes in the Antarctic Ocean, ice shelf and landmass way exceed average world rises. Part of SEEing is to be aware of local differences.

The major physical impacts of climate change for Australia and its territories can be considered under the headings of water, temperature, oceans, infrastructure, biodiversity, food production, and human health.

- Water - less rain in the south but more in the tropics, more intense storms, cyclones as far south as Sydney, more severe droughts and floods, ground water decline
- Higher Temperatures – quickly drying soil, more deserts, more intense and frequent bush fires, shrinking snow fields, high temperature increases towards the Pole
- Sea - levels rising, increasingly acidification, coral bleaching, coastal erosion, fish species and sea forests migration or death

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<sup>12</sup> [www.bom.gov.au/climate](http://www.bom.gov.au/climate) [www.greenhouse.gov.au](http://www.greenhouse.gov.au)

<sup>13</sup> A report on agriculture by ABARE March 2006 estimates that a 3.6 degree rise is likely.

<sup>14</sup> David Spratt and Philip Sutton, *Climate Code Red*, 2008, [www.foe.org.au](http://www.foe.org.au). By virtue of the methodology used, IPCC data and predictions tend to lag behind rapidly changing situations, such as melting at the Poles and the impact of just 1 degree warming as a world average. The rapidly worsening situation is dire as positive feedbacks increase. 'Global warming, water shortages, peak oil, ecosystem destruction, resource depletion, global inequity and threat of pandemics intersect and intertwine.' [www.cana.org](http://www.cana.org) [www.climateinstitute.org.au](http://www.climateinstitute.org.au) [www.planteextinction.com](http://www.planteextinction.com) [www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au) [www.greenpeace.org.au](http://www.greenpeace.org.au) <http://www.panda.org/climate/>

- Infrastructure failures - energy demand increases, road and rail disruptions, wrong building designs, dwindling water supply, inadequate disaster response capabilities,
- Biodiversity - extinction of species as habitat changes, major wetlands loss, limited time for adaptation, broken migration corridors, key ecosystem trees dying, invasive weed/animal/bird/marine species
- Food Production – planting and fruit budding seasons change, irrigated Murray-Darling ‘bread basket’ production decline, less live-stock carrying capacity, industrial agricultural model failures, misdirected research infrastructure
- Health - more dengue fever and other tropical pathogens in northern hot humid environments, disease travels further south, heat-wave stress and deaths, food shortages, less dietary variety and nutritional value.

### **Three seminal Australian Books on Climate Change**

Ignorance about climate change is a major obstacle to SEEing when making a Catholic response. Church leadership at the pastoral level seems blind. It is not only the media shock-jocks but religious leaders who do not believe what Vatican II said about taking life in this world seriously. It was not always so. A good example of formation for religious leadership was the movement for the liberal education of the clergy in 19<sup>th</sup> century England. Australia benefited from this before the Modernism scare took hold.<sup>15</sup> A renaissance of Church leadership took place after Vatican II but this has now faded and clergy/religious numbers have shrunk. However for those with *eyes to see*, three books explain well the Australian situation on Climate Change.

Tim Flannery *The Weather Makers: The History and Future Impact of Climate Change*. Melbourne: Text, 2005. Every library needs a copy. Tim’s book goes from climate history, through paleo-evidence over 3 billion years, explains natural cycles and examines the options from renewable energy sources. His book also opens up spiritual messages for the discerning heart. For example, he describes the atmosphere variously as the Great Aerial Ocean, an aerial blood stream, and an organ of inter-connection. These images are a source for awe filled prayer.

Mark Diesendorf *Greenhouse Solutions with Sustainable Energy*, Sydney: UNSW Press 2007. Mark presents a practical, science based and detailed way to act now to deploy a bundle of available renewable energy sources, including the supply of base-power equal to that of a coal fired station. He answers the objections of climate-sceptics and weighs up energy options. His book is based on up to date science. Significantly, it is remarkably hopeful in that it maps some ways forward; a positive for any believer.

Guy Pearce *High & Dry: John Howard, climate change and the selling of Australia's future* Melbourne: Penguin Viking 2007. Pearce was a Liberal insider for more than a decade. From a political and economic viewpoint, his work builds on Flannery’s scientific work and the alternative energy question addressed by Diesendorf. He presents a twofold agenda: expose the lies Australian voters have been sold, and, raise the alarm about the urgency and what is at stake as climate change kicks in. He presents five steps as a way forward: 1/ argue that deep greenhouse gas cuts are economically affordable, indeed an economic imperative; 2/ be aware that the public is ready to cut emissions; 3/ be aware that business is ready to back climate policy changes; 4/ demand that the media better expose past lies and detail the real

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<sup>15</sup> Charles Rue, *Catholics and Nature: Two hundred years of environmental attitudes in Australia*, Sydney: ACSJC, 2006, No. 57 pp. 12-17. [www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au)

threat climate change poses<sup>16</sup>; finally, 5/ forge a face-saving way forward for both Liberals and Labour parties that urgently builds effective policies onto existing initiatives and technology. Voters have to continually choose how history will unfold, creating their own and their children's' future.

## JUDGE

### **Traditional Faith Resources help in making a Catholic Response**

Max Weber wrote that religion can either reinforce the *status quo* or challenge it to transformation. Catholics can be both assertive and discerning regarding climate change. They can assert the positive role of Earth in the Christian Story – salvation, revelation, incarnation, sacramental signs, mysticism and the promise of life to the full. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) explores the place of creation in God's providence. *The Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching* (2002) has a whole section on environmental care as integral to faith which updates Catholic social principles to embrace the ecological dimension. Taking scientific findings seriously, a positive view of Earth's role has been developed by modern theologians from the time of Tiedhard de Chardin SJ through to Thomas Berry CP and his book *New Story*. More recently Australian and Adelaide based diocesan priest Denis Edwards' multiple books detail how environmental concern is rooted in the Catholic tradition. Theologians such as Rosemary Reuther establish eco-feminine insights within that same Catholic tradition. There is ample material in Catholic tradition to meditate on and discern faith filled responses regarding climate change.

Catholic judgment must be hard-nosed if it is to present a realistic hope to the world and ourselves; rooted in reality. Pope Benedict's 2007 Encyclical *Spe Salvi* no. 33 says hope must be rooted in human history and is not to be found in trying to hide in a private corner of happiness. Genuine hope-filled and enlightening ways forward emerge when humanity purges itself of the superficial and comfortable, and frees itself from hidden lies. Prayer, worthy of God and worthy of God's designs, will achieve this, the Pope promises.

A modern Catholic spiritual journey not only embraces the natural world, including the reality of climate change, but it revels in the mystery it reveals. When launching Catholic Earthcare Australia, Archbishop John Bathersby said:

*The entire life of Christians is an exploration into Christ. Each generation pushes back ever so slightly the envelope of his mystery ... One of the most significant developments in Catholic understanding of the Christian mission in more recent times is its embrace of creation in all its beauty and vitality.*

The Australian Catholic Bishops 2005 position paper on Climate Change said,

*We believe that the Earth is a gift from God, valuable in itself, and that human life is irrevocably linked with the Earth. Catholic faith believes that the cosmos displays the goodness, beauty and power of God.*<sup>17</sup>

Gaining *an expanded vision of Earth as part of the mystery of salvation is a frightening thing.* Not only does humanity's responsibility as the most conscious being within creation become

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<sup>16</sup> The national broadcaster, the ABC, has been a good but lonely voice in the past.

<sup>17</sup> [www.catholicearthcareoz.net](http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net)

more onerous and therefore frightening, the intimate connection between humanity and Earth opens up realms of mystery that are also spiritually frightening.<sup>18</sup> The incarnation of Jesus has deep implications as the whole cosmos is named as holy and sacramental. 'Matter is a risk taken by the spirit' wrote Donald Nicholl.<sup>19</sup> Embedded in the Catholic Tradition, St Athanasius of Alexandria wrote, 'The Word of God became man so that we might become God. (54:3)'. St Thomas Aquinas taught that Earth's diversity opens a spiritual path to *appreciating the fullness of God's own self*.

The mystery of God immanent in Earth is indeed frightening and makes lesser spiritual aims seem paltry. Pope John Paul II in a Speech to Agriculturists in 2000 said, *Within the movement of nature, tranquil and silent but rich in life, there continues to palpitate the original delight of the Creator*. Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his Peace Day Message 2007, *Before it is too late, it is necessary to make courageous decisions that reflect knowing how to re-create a strong alliance between humanity and the earth*. In his Message 2008 he said that *Earth is the human family's common home*.

### **New Interpretations of Scripture**

Scripture has insights into humanity's relationship with Earth as the twin pillar along with living Tradition on which Catholic faith stands. Scripture witnesses to God's wisdom imbedded in the Earth: *If you would learn more, ask the cattle, seek information from the birds of the air* (Job 12.7; 38:2). Modern biblical scholarship is rediscovering *Earth as a voice of the Holy Spirit*. Pope John Paul II called creation the first revelation.<sup>20</sup> Much of the thanks for rediscovering the voice of Earth in Scripture must go to women theologians such as Rosemary Reuther. They used the hermeneutic of suspicion to explore the silencing of Earth's voice in much the same way in which the muted voice of women in the Scriptures was recovered. Australia can be proud of Adelaide's Earth Bible Project team led by Rev. Dr. Norman Habel which has further developed this insight. To carry this voice into communal prayer, Habel has developed a lectionary for a *Season of Creation* over the four Sundays leading up to the feast day of St Francis of Assisi.<sup>21</sup>

Scripture presents the language of prophecy as the voice of God. In our times Earth has shown itself as loudly prophetic. In devastating New Orleans, hurricane Katrina was prophetic in showing up the consequences of human arrogance – local arrogance in clearing the mangroves and cutting canals thus opening the city to disaster; global arrogance in increasing greenhouse gases that heat shallow waters like the Gulf of Mexico thus increasing the intensity of hurricanes. Other voices of prophet Earth are the melting of heat reflecting ice in the Arctic waters, the rapid decline of glaciers in the Himalayas and Andes which feed rivers that support billions of people, melting land-based ice sheets in the Antarctic and droughts in Australia. *Earth's prophetic messages are a source of prayerful reflection*.

Importantly for action on climate change, new Scriptural insights counter fundamentalist notions about the human-nature relationship presented in the Scriptures. For example, the simplistic notion that Genesis sanctions humanity's domination of the earth gives way to the demand that humanity build a caring relationship with Earth like the one God exercises. A new

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<sup>18</sup> Ecumenical Group, *Liturgy in the Forest*, Melbourne 1995.

<sup>19</sup> *Tablet* 5.07.97

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II Audience 30 Jan 2002. *For those who have attentive ears and unveiled eyes, creation is like a first revelation, which has its own eloquent language: It is almost like another sacred book whose letters are represented by the multitude of creatures present in the universe*.

<sup>21</sup> Norman C. Habel [www.seasonofcreation.com](http://www.seasonofcreation.com)

respect for nature gives deeper import to Scripture's stricture that Earth belongs to God and humans are accountable for its use, and abuse. Catholics are called to be truth tellers to *expose fundamentalist Scriptural interpretations as lies and excuses for human arrogance*. This new understanding of the Scriptural truths about the human-earth relationship impels Catholics to turn away for exploitative institutional economic plans and wasteful life-styles, and negotiate a new relationship with the sciences. A prayer asking forgiveness of God, scientists and much maligned environmentalists would not be out of place.

Father Sean McDonagh in *Climate Change: the challenge to us all*, (Dublin: Columba Press, 2006) writes that climate change is not just one environmental problem among a host of other social or even environmental problems. It is foundational. A near exclusive focus on the human condition is a weakness in Catholic social teaching, limiting its analysis and channelling solutions offered.<sup>22</sup> McDonagh names climate change as a *priority mission issue for the Church because it puts all life on this planet under threat, human and biotic alike*. The flourishing of the life in all forms is salvific. Cardinal Bernadine of Chicago and the New Zealand Catholic bishops have written on the protection of all life as a seamless garment. McDonagh details the major climate change challenges for believers; however, he is sad that the responses made so far across the Christian churches have not been impressive.<sup>23</sup> He says that they are now called to make a credible church response to the science of climate change. Neglect would be a sin.<sup>24</sup>

In previous books on Catholic faith and the environment, Father McDonagh has detailed the spiritual insights about the land he gained over several decades from working among the T'boli tribal people of the southern Philippines. His insights can help Australians become more receptive to the spirituality and ethics of Aboriginal people. Their attitude of respect for the land from which they were drawn and which is their mother flows easily on to attitudes of living lightly on the land where they have survived for at least 60,000 years. Norman Habel has explored Aboriginal spirituality which has helped him in creating his Season of Creation. Such spirituality resonates with tribal peoples around the world, and the biblical tradition, argues Columban Peter Woodruff in his thesis on a spirituality grown within an Andean geography.<sup>25</sup>

### **Catholic Environmental Ethical Principles**

People and governments need to go beyond 'pragmatic' knee jerk reactions when facing climate change to *create a vision, make plans and adopt strategies based on principles*. Creating such a vision does not just happen but must be cultivated, based upon what we value and what is at stake. Such a vision based on values can be explained with ethical reasoning and expressed in principles. These help clarify the values which Catholics hold and form a basis of moral integrity.

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<sup>22</sup> Charles Rue, *Catholics and Nature* ACSJC, 2006. Michael Raper, 'Jesuit Lentern Series 2008'.

<sup>23</sup> United States Catholic Bishops *Global Climate Change* 2001, revised 2007 [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org) A coalition of US Catholics on Climate Change has been formed along with ecumenical networks.

<sup>24</sup> Michael S. Northcott, *A Moral Climate: the ethics of global warming*, Orbis 2007, argues that 'Global warming is the earth's judgment on the global market empire, and on the heedless consumption it fosters'. His introduction says, 'Australia is a microcosm for what is happening to planet earth in the present ecological crisis.' He traces an inter-play between the prophetic tradition in Scripture and scientific findings on human induced climate change - *geo-political crisis* of ancient Israel and the *eco-political crisis* facing the modern world – to set out a strong theological basis for Christian action on the climate challenge.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Woodruff, 'Andean culture and Catholic faith', Thesis, LaTrobe University 2007. Andean concepts of the fruit of the earth and the spirit of the earth (Pachamama) transfer easily to Jesus and devotion to Mary, and relate easily to humanity being fashioned in the depths of the earth as a womb Ps. 139 and formed from clay of the earth Gen. 2:7.

The 1990 Peace Day Message of Pope John Paul II was foundational in establishing a list of principles for facing environmental issues. These have since been amplified and systematised in the Church's Catechism and Compendium of Social Teaching, and formed the basis for the 2005 Position Paper of the Australian bishops which specifically presented a set of principles for judging climate change, locally and globally, including.<sup>26</sup>

Some Principles:

- the right of all people to a *safe environment*,
- consider the *common good*,
- dismantle the social *structures of sin*,
- authentic development avoiding *super development*,<sup>27</sup>
- the *precautionary principle*,<sup>28</sup>
- preferential *option for the poor*
- the rights of *future generations*,
- fair distribution of climate change *abatement costs*,
- solidarity with developing countries by *sharing modern technology*,<sup>29 30</sup>
- welcome *environmental refugees*,<sup>31</sup> and
- respect the wider earth community by preserving *bio-diversity*.<sup>32</sup>

A strong Catholic moral position linking climate change and sustainability was presented in 2007 by Archbishop Migliore at the UN speaking as the Vatican's official representative.<sup>33</sup>

An emerging topic when considering climate change is *human population and the human footprint*. This is a contentious issue and often an elephant in the room which Catholics try to ignore. They try to ignore it both because of the church stance on abortion and the fear of pastors in developed countries to confront their parishioners about their high levels of consumption. Methods of family planning have grown as a public issue of contention since the Cairo Conference where Cardinal Martino and Al Gore took opposing views. In reality, while most Catholics condemn abortion, their actions show that they support family planning.

However, debate on limiting population numbers also brings into stark relief the debate on levels of *individual consumption* and *super development*. This amplifies the relevance of

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<sup>26</sup> Australian Catholic bishops' *Climate Change Conference* November 2005 [www.catholicearthcareoz.net](http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net). *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994. (cf. Nos. 2422-3, 1981, 2403, 2415). *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004. (cf. Nos. 26, 170, 454)

<sup>27</sup> John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus* (1991) No 35-40; *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) Nos 28-34; *Redemptor Hominis* (1979) No 8, 55, 90 and 92.

<sup>28</sup> *The Top Ten World Rivers at risk* C M Wong et al, WWF, March 2007; Inland Rivers Network NSW [www.irnsw.org.au](http://www.irnsw.org.au)

<sup>29</sup> [www.iied.org/pubs](http://www.iied.org/pubs) [www.earthprint.com](http://www.earthprint.com) *Sea Levels in Developing Countries* WWF Policy Paper, February 2007. Some of Australia's Torres Strait and PNG islands like Carteret have started going under the sea. [www.foe.org.au](http://www.foe.org.au)

<sup>30</sup> 'Respect for nature by everyone, a policy of openness to immigrants, the cancellation or significant reduction of the debt of poorer nations, the promotion of peace through dialogue and negotiation, the primacy of the rule of law: these are the priorities which the leaders of the developed nations cannot disregard.' John Paul II Speech to President George Bush 23 July 2001 No 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Human Tide: the real migration crisis*, Christian Aid, May 2007, [www.christianaid.org.au](http://www.christianaid.org.au)

<sup>32</sup> 30 kms of sea-weed forest off Sydney has been lost (Richard Macey SMH 4.08.07); Sean McDonagh *Death of Life*.

<sup>33</sup> Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Holy See's permanent observer to the United Nations, address May 10 2007 at the 15th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Catholic principles. Pressure on Earth's living systems arises from a combination of population numbers and standard of living. Measuring a nation's *ecological footprint* (hectares needed to support a person) produces some surprising figures. In absolute terms of impact on Earth, Australia's population of 21 million X 9htr versus India's population of 1,100 million X 0.2htr show a similar impact. This is because the Australian life style has 45 times the impact per person. Pope John Paul II, *On Social Concern* No. 8, argued that,

*A more responsible approach to population issues is the promotion of 'authentic development,' which represents a balanced view of human progress and includes respect for nature and social well-being.*

A major principle in Catholic teaching is that *peace is integrally connected with justice*. Climate change poses a challenge for world peace and must be a part of church prayer for peace. For many strategists the peace debate is framed in terms of 'national security' and they see that climate change will lead to greater competition for scarce water and food resources, and even for land itself as sea levels rise. Environmental refugees will increasingly cross borders leading to conflict. Pacific island refugees are already entering Australia. Sir Jock Stirrup, UK Chief of Staff, in December 2006 said,

*Climate change and growing competition for scarce resources are together likely to increase the incidence of humanitarian crisis. The spread of desert regions, a scarcity of water, coastal erosion, declining arable land, damage to infrastructure from extreme weather: all could undermine security.*

### **Morally Questionable Solutions to Climate Change**

The issue of climate change has brought up many related debates such as nuclear energy and bio-fuels. While at first such topics seem to be practical detail on which Catholic teaching has nothing to say, elements within them raise moral issues on which it is right to ask questions and make at least some partial judgments using Catholic values and social principles. This is done within self imposed Church limits to involvement in the secular affairs, offering prudential judgments but wary of seeming to dictate particular solutions.<sup>34</sup> However, Catholic involvement in this wider debate is particularly important in a modern context of lies and PR spin, the urgency needed in finding solutions, and the reality of 'Peak Oil' where head in the sand attitudes abound. Many misleading arguments have undermined progress.

The argument goes that a strong economy will insulate Australia from action on climate change. However, if earth systems of water supply and food production are compromised, even the richest nations will lose their ecological basis of prosperity while poor nations will become radically poor.<sup>35</sup> In a *Review of the Economics of Climate Change* in 2006 Sir Nicholas Stern showed that *it is cheaper to act now on climate change rather than wait*.<sup>36</sup> The interim Garnaut Review February 2008 delivered similar indications specifically for Australia. It is of note that insurance industry was one of the first sectors to take climate change disasters into their assessment of risks, and also to sponsor community conferences to build awareness of climate change, such as that run by Catholic Earthcare Australia. To delay action for economic reasons is erroneous thinking and would put an unjust burden on future generations and further compromise Earth's ecological systems, the basis for all life.

The argument goes that technologies to do with clean-coal (carbon capture and storage) must be given priority because coal will be the major source of energy into the future. However, this

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<sup>34</sup> John Warhurst, *The Church and Public Debate*, 2004, ACSJC No 50.

<sup>35</sup> Proceedings of the Columban Society General Assembly 1988.

<sup>36</sup> [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk) <http://www.wri.org/>

argument is based: on promised but as yet not existing technologies; on an unfair assessment of existing alternatives; and on unfair preference in the allocation of research and development grants. The specific IPCC report states that, in itself, carbon capture from coal burning holds many as yet unresolved risks.<sup>37</sup> Guy Pearce explores the deceptive statements by Australian governments, Liberal and Labour, and vested coal interests to avoid addressing other long-term solutions to climate change.<sup>38</sup> While clean-coal may have a place in future energy supplies, it is not to be confused with implementing greater efficiency in existing plants, an urgent technical task for the whole world. Neither must clean-coal become a distraction away from a more comprehensive solution, including the capture of carbon in better agricultural systems. It cannot be forgotten that besides emitting greenhouse gases, the direct environmental damage of coal mining and production on land, people and communities is significant in NSW rural and urban areas. Clear logical thinking and not emotional reactions is needed, even when considering the future of jobs in the coal industry. European economies such as Germany and Denmark have shown that *there is a long term future in jobs as part of 'green development'*.

The argument goes that bio-fuels will fill the gap left by fossil fuels and preserve our way of life. However, while bio-fuels will have a place in a mix of new fuel sources, especially in the subsistence farming of poorer countries, the pursuit of the bio-fuel option is often an expression of climate denial by the rich, fooling themselves that their lifestyle will not change.<sup>39</sup> More profoundly *bio-fuels raise multiple moral questions*. Bio-fuel production diverts land away from food production as is evidenced by the worldwide shortage and rising prices of grain.<sup>40</sup> Bio-fuel will cause greater ecological destruction as rain forests are cleared to grow palm-oil and like plants. The use of marginal lands for bio-fuel production as proposed in Australia has not been tested for biological effects. However, two positives for the use of bio-fuel at the local level are firstly, it can be produced on-farm so avoiding the use of fuel in transporting fuel, and second, the technology can help poor farmers become more self sufficient.

A disturbing element in the bio-fuel debate is the use of genetic manipulation technologies in bio-crops by inserting GM micro-organisms and enzymes to enhance the breakdown of cellulose and so produce more bio-fuel.<sup>41</sup> Columban Mission has campaigned on GM issues for a decade because of *dangers inherent in the application of GM technology* - biotech companies use patenting laws to control the food chain; the untested health risks of GM food; and the threat of bio-devastation through genetic cross fertilisation.<sup>42</sup> GM bio-fuel creates

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<sup>37</sup> IPCC *Special Report on Carbon Dioxide Capture and Storage* (CCS) 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Pearce *High and Dry*; Clive Hamilton *Scorcher: the dirty politics of climate change* Black Ink, 2007. Labor's Federal Energy Minister Martin Ferguson and NSW's Energy Minister Ian McDonald are enthusiastic supporters of so called 'clean coal' (Marian Wilkinson, SMH 19 03 08).

<sup>39</sup> World Watch Institute, *State of the World 2006: Special Focus, China and India* (2006, W. Norton). Biofuels produced and used on farm reduces input costs and breaks dependency on outside inputs.

<sup>40</sup> Eric Holtz-Gimenez 'Peasants, Higher Food Prices – and a Crutch for the Petrol Economy' *Le Monde Diplomatique* 03 07 07; *Seedling* July 2007 [www.grain.org](http://www.grain.org); Biodiesel Association of Australia.

<sup>41</sup> BP and Monsanto are developing GM bio-fuels [www.econexus.info](http://www.econexus.info)

<sup>42</sup> Columban Mission, JPICoZ, DVD *Unjust Genes* 2006. [www.columban.org.au](http://www.columban.org.au) Speaking to Robyn Williams of the Science Show on the ABC RN, outgoing president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, David Baltimore, said of gene technology, 'we got it wrong'. After 35 years of research on retroviruses we 'did not understand the nature of these vectors and the problems that they have inherent in them' and another problem was 'a rush to commercialisation'. Friends of the Earth, *Who benefits from GM crops?* January 2008 is a very clear and up to date summary of the key issues.

major problems. Alarming, the new Labour Minister for Agriculture is pro-GM.<sup>43</sup> So, just where and what type of bio-fuel production is part of a mix of alternative technologies does not lend itself to a simplistic answer. Prudence is needed.

The argument runs that the introduction of carbon credits and carbon trading will let the markets solve the problem of climate change.<sup>44</sup> However, *the energy problem, and other environmental problems, exemplifies gross market failure*. This notion is anathema to neo-liberal economics but accepted by eco-reality and ethical based economists. So called 'economic externalities' have come back to haunt us as we learn that Earth can have no garbage dumps, created either for the rich or the socially disadvantaged. While the mechanisms of carbon trading are complex, putting a cap on emissions and a real price on carbon are an essential first step; 'Carbon credits don't grow on trees' wrote Wendy Frew (SMH 24.05.07; 07.07.07). The risks of profiteering in carbon trading may lead to a credibility gap for its promoters as has already happened in Europe.<sup>45</sup> Such profiteering was exemplified in Australia in the allocation and trading of water rights. Make-believe water was sold at great profit by large land holding companies and cash strapped family farmers. The end result was decreased environmental flows at great cost to river health. Again, prudence would seem to call for careful moral discernment about carbon trading as it offers no panacea.

The argument runs that nuclear energy will be a clean technological solution. However, the risks inherent in nuclear power generation make it a questionable option. This is especially so for Australia which has proven energy alternatives and the nuclear promise is technologically at least fifteen years away. The *many risks with nuclear energy* include: health issues for workers; nuclear arms proliferation; high economic costs of production and decommissioning; high research costs etc. Catholic and other groups have explored the nuclear power option including school students at Lewisham Catholic High.<sup>46</sup> It seems that debate about taking the nuclear option in Australia is no more than a distraction raised to delay alternative action. Morally more debatable is the duty of Australia to take back spent uranium for storage as its uranium ore exports continue to rise. However, since it is estimated that high grade uranium ore stocks worldwide will be depleted in about forty years, maybe Australia should lead the way now in promoting renewable alternatives to the uranium energy option worldwide. Nations can leap-frog ahead if nuclear power stations are not replaced at the end of their working life as is the UK option.

### **Examples of Church Institutional Choices showing Moral Integrity**

The Australian Catholic bishops established *Catholic Earthcare Australia* (CEA) in 2002 as their agency on environmental matters and it was the theme of their social statement that year. Significantly, the name of the bishops' committee of oversight for CEA was changed to include ecology along with the traditional human focused (anthropocentric) categories of development, justice and peace. In November 2005 CEA organized a three day *Conference*

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<sup>43</sup> The application of GM as 'one piece of the puzzle in dealing with climate change' was endorsed by the Labor Minister for Agriculture, Tony Burke, in a speech to ABARE 05 03 08. He denies any large impact of transport from 'food-miles' greenhouse emissions and called it a deceptive European con.

<sup>44</sup> [www.carbonradewatch.org](http://www.carbonradewatch.org)

<sup>45</sup> Clive Hamilton of The Australia Institute writes of 7 tests for effective carbon trading including putting a real price on carbon SMH 31 05 07.

<sup>46</sup> Luke Vaughan for Catholic Social Services Victoria and the Melbourne Catholic Commission for JDP in collaboration with the Victorian Council of Churches, *Nuclear Power: Cure or Curse?- A Discussion Paper*, Nov. 2007 [www.css.org.au](http://www.css.org.au) Medical Association for Prevention of War [www.mapw.org.au](http://www.mapw.org.au) *Nuclear Power: no solution to climate change*, 2006, sponsored by several environmental groups and updated, *Australia and the Nuclear Option*, May 2007 [www.foe.org.au](http://www.foe.org.au). [www.nuclearspin.org](http://www.nuclearspin.org)

on *Climate Change* and presented a position paper for discussion.<sup>47</sup> More than 300 international and local scientists, theologians, activists, lay and clerical, secular and ecumenical came together. The topics of papers ranged from cosmology to the effects of climate change on human health.<sup>48</sup>

The 2005 conference must be set against the background of the two national Catholic agencies of the Catholic Bishops Conference, Caritas Australia (formerly Australian Catholic Relief) and the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC). These agencies fostered *eco-awareness from the 1990s as a background to their overseas relief and social justice work*. The agencies wanted to address causes and not just symptoms. Prayer resources on the environment were an important part of the materials they made available to parishes and schools. In theory Catholic Earthcare has now assumed this responsibility but its supporting infrastructure is minimal.

Several smaller dioceses and some diocesan Justice and Peace Offices have been active specifically on climate change, notably, Adelaide and Townsville. Adelaide has built an energy efficient office block. Townsville diocese has also decided to implement an 'energy and ecological' audit. Programs to assess the ecological sustainability and energy efficiency of Catholic buildings and institutions are supported by Catholic Earthcare Australia. A specific program focused on parish and other communities began in 2008.

A significant move towards education for the environment has been taken by Catholic School offices and CEA in co-authoring *On Holy Ground*. It suggests a faith based program of method and material for reflection on environmental issues, including climate change. This program has been localised in some States. It is also backed up by school sustainability audits and development programs done in cooperation with government agencies, and by dedicated Catholic environmental centres such as those in Townsville and Bendigo dioceses.

The positive education 'for the environment' already being given to Catholic school children needs to be more vigorously pursued in adult Catholic education programs, centres and universities. The Broken Bay Institute, Catholic Institute of Sydney and Adelaide College of Divinity have offered a few eco-theology courses.

Like many Religious Congregations worldwide, members of some congregations in Australia have taken a lead in implementing energy restraint within their institutional houses.<sup>49</sup> They have also initiated church structural responses such as ecological education centres and retreats houses, and involved lay people in the process.<sup>50</sup> Significantly, their work often focuses on personal conversion in line with Pope John Paul's *call for ecological conversion*.<sup>51</sup>

Some Catholic groups have initiated faith-sharing and social activism on climate change by bringing together believers from many faiths. Ecumenical reflection action on the perils of

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<sup>47</sup> [www.catholicearthcareoz.net](http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net) Charles Rue was the principal drafter of the position paper.

<sup>48</sup> Father Michael (Michał) Heller, a Polish cosmologist and Catholic priest, 11 03 08 won the 2008 Templeton Prize which bridges science and religion.

<sup>49</sup> Religious Leaders, Rome, *Global Warming* 2004 [www.ofm-jpic.org/globalwarming](http://www.ofm-jpic.org/globalwarming)

<sup>50</sup> Brigidine Sisters, Good Samaritan Sisters, Christian Brothers, Presentation Sisters, Mercy Sisters and others in Australia.

<sup>51</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Peace Message* 2002

Climate Change became very public by 1993 for the World Council of Churches (WCC).<sup>52</sup> Yale and Harvard university departments of religion and environment have many publications.<sup>53</sup> The UK, USA, South Korea and other countries have similar interfaith environmental working groups.

In Sydney, an inter-faith group, Faith and Ecology Network (FEN) was started in 2003 by the Columban Centre for Peace, Ecology and Justice. Following a series of talks and reflections June 2007, FEN issued a *Statement on Climate Change*.<sup>54</sup> Aboriginal story teller Frances Bodkin has been an active member of the group from the beginning. Notably, the government has a dedicated website which brings together Aboriginal stories on climate events and natural signs, such as localised records which pre-existed white settlement – indigenous weather knowledge.<sup>55</sup>

The increasing number of contacts between secular and faith based groups witness to mutual respect and cooperation as a significant development in dialogue. Through dialogue, secular and religious people alike are learning from each others in pursuit of ecological goals which go beyond the dreams and abilities of either side.<sup>56</sup> A secular NGO in Sydney, the Climate Institute, in 2006 published a collection of Climate Change Statements from sixteen religious traditions.<sup>57</sup> A recent Vatican note on dialogue states,

*Every encounter with another person or culture is capable of revealing potentialities of the Gospel which hitherto may not have been fully explicit and which will enrich the life of Christians and the Church.*<sup>58</sup>

The Holy See has given example by a program to put Vatican City on a more carbon friendly basis.<sup>59</sup> The churches, including the Catholic Church, control significant resources in the non-government sector. If they audit their enterprises with the aim of reducing global warming gas emissions and act to implement changes from water saving to generating photo-voltaic power, they can offer a credible example of addressing ecological issues.<sup>60</sup>

### **Identifying Key Sectors for Individual and Community Action**

People often find it easier to focus on one area of action and band together with others for mutual encouragement. If we believe in the one common human family, we must believe that God is inspiring people in all walks of life and at every level to do what they can for the common good in addressing climate change. Just as happened in the successful Australian campaign to address AIDS, there will be no solution to the problems of climate change unless its victims are involved. Australians in every walk of life will be victims of climate change. The Preamble to *State of the Environment Australia 2001*, said,

"The key to Australia's sustainable future lies in us, our attitudes towards the environment, our heritage and each other. Positive change can be achieved when

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<sup>52</sup> WCC *Time of Peril: Test of Faith* 1993 and updated. Canadian Rev David Hallman presented a paper at CEA's *Climate Change Conference* in Canberra 2005.

<sup>53</sup> <http://environment.yale.edu/climate/working-groups/religion-ethics/current-climate-change-work-in-religion-and-ethics/>

<sup>54</sup> [www.columban.org.au](http://www.columban.org.au)

<sup>55</sup> [www.bom.gov.au/iwk/](http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/)

<sup>56</sup> John Paul II, *Mission of the Redeemer*, Nos. 56-58.

<sup>57</sup> [www.climateinstitute.org.au](http://www.climateinstitute.org.au)

<sup>58</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'The Missionary Mandate belongs to the very nature of the Church', 14.12.07, No. 7.

<sup>59</sup> Francis Rocca *The Holy See is Going Green: Solar and Offsets* [www.religiousnews.com](http://www.religiousnews.com)

<sup>60</sup> Michael Kelly at the Jesuit Lenten Series 2008, North Sydney.

people see options for improvement in their quality of life and opportunities for their children and grandchildren. This change is accelerated when public awareness is translated into political action that influences the activities of our society to care for our country."

While action in one's personal life on climate change is not enough by itself, individual action can influence the community by *judging the potential for action within one's own sector in life and working from that local base*. Each sector of the community is at all times playing a role in building a future Australia, and there will be people in each sector who want to address climate change. Even though individual action in the work place and in one's sector of life is difficult and excuses are easy to find – it is not my decision; I don't have to pay - personal commitment to lobbying within one's sphere of influence will have a major effect on the shape and scope of action on climate change.

- Consumers - Australians buy something most days and some are sending powerful signals to the market by their *greenhouse-friendly choice of goods and services*.
- Food Sector – *Many aspects of food impact on greenhouse gas emissions*: The amount of food eaten or wasted, its packaging, its source, home grown, the distance it travels as 'food miles', the proportion of meat based or organic, industrial or home grown– a new consciousness is emerging.<sup>61</sup>
- Advertisers – Lifestyle programs often present 'green-wash'. While advertising *recognises lifestyle as an issue*, some consumerist advertising profoundly undermines social conscience.<sup>62</sup>
- Media – Fortunately some media try to *counter lies about climate change, abating fears about the effect of strong corrective action on economics and life-style, and fairly reporting on alternatives*.<sup>63</sup>
- Home owners – As housing is one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions, the *choice of home size and energy efficiency* is influencing what choices some builders are offering.
- Business people – Ethical investment has increased over a decade and business now appreciates that there is *money to be made by investing in alternative energy*.<sup>64</sup>
- Voters - All three levels of government are being influenced in their decision making when citizens *use the available structures for participation*.
- Land based Transport – More passengers are using public transport while car owners and freighters are *choosing more efficient cars, buses and trucks* to reduce carbon emissions.<sup>65</sup>
- Aviation – The *high altitude impact of greenhouse gases is 2.7 times that at ground level*. Fast trains, city centre to city centre, offer alternatives to air travel in many countries.<sup>66</sup>
- Economic Planners - Managers are beginning to bring into their accounting *the short and long term economic costs of the effects of climate change*.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> <http://www.phaa.net.au/documents/August07.pdf> [www.ssfa.org.au](http://www.ssfa.org.au)

<sup>62</sup> Julian Lee on bottled water, 'Message on a bottle labeled as green-wash', SMH 23.02.08.

<sup>63</sup> Benedict XVI Message released (24.01.08) for World Communications Day, communication can be 'used for ideological purposes or for the aggressive advertising of consumer products. While claiming to represent reality, it can tend to legitimize or impose distorted models of personal, family or social life.'

<sup>64</sup> Lisa Murray 'Bali's business bonanza' SMH 15.12.07.

<sup>65</sup> Chris Riedy of the *Institute of Sustainable Futures* UNSW has written extensively on transport options.

<sup>66</sup> Ethical Travel [www.newint.org](http://www.newint.org)

<sup>67</sup> Australian Ethical Investment [www.austethical.com.au](http://www.austethical.com.au) ; Corporate Watch [www.corporatewatch.org.uk](http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk) UK Report to the Prime Minister 2006 on the Economic effects of Climate Change.

- Infrastructure planners, architects and building companies – Some owners, managers and their employees have begun implementing *designs that produce less greenhouse gases*.<sup>68</sup>
- Industry, manufacturing, electrical generation and supply – Some industries have begun both to *promote energy saving and seek alternative energy sources which create new jobs*.
- Legal profession – New *local and cross boarder legal frameworks* are but slowly being drawn up and environmental disputes solved with speed and equity.

*The agricultural and forestry sectors deserve special mention since they are both major sources and major sinks for carbon.* For decades the largely government financed CSIRO has introduced Australian farmers and foresters to environmentally sustainable practices.<sup>69</sup> But the present Federal Government does not seem to be moving away from the restrictive past policies fast enough to finance agricultural research at a meaningful level.<sup>70</sup> In the urban setting, community garden and other groups are developing alternatives.<sup>71</sup>

However, wasteful irrigation practices and large scale land clearing, including clear felling old growth forests, and forms of farming and forestry that 'mine the land' have not stopped. To address this, one proposal is that Australian farmers be paid to preserve existing ground cover so that its carbon is not released into the atmosphere and the land itself improves its capacity as a carbon-sink. Good ecological farming would seem to demand this practice regardless. A major paper by the UN's FAO argues that organic agriculture holds the best farming option in addressing climate change – sustainable yields, healthy soils as carbon sinks, less fossil fuel inputs, increased employment etc.<sup>72</sup> Some farmers are trying but widespread organic farming would be nothing short of a revolution for Australian farming. Changing ways would not be easy for farmers especially as their economic margins are low and decreasing as more extreme weather bites. Many timber companies rely on all-but-free state and old-growth forests to the disadvantage of farmed forestry. Imported timber adds to the complexity.

The ABC's Landline often reports on initiatives taken in planning a way forward. They need to be commended and supported. But, greater education and finance is needed for a younger generation of farmers and foresters who are willing and capable of using alternative models of ecologically sustainable rural production. *Agriculture and forestry are huge sectors and fundamental to addressing climate change in Australia as carbon producers and sinks.*

## ACT

### **Learn the Language of Climate Change for informed Judgment and Action**

The greatest mark of respect for climate scientists, climate change economists and political decision makers, and for the development of the Catholic faith itself is to learn the language of climate change. Firstly, the language of ecology resonates easily with Catholics - community, mutuality, inter-connectedness, regeneration, transformation. Learning the language of

<sup>68</sup> <http://architecture.com.au/> <http://gbcaus.org/> <http://abgr.com.au/rating>

<sup>69</sup> 'Edible Earth' July 2007 issue of *New Internationalist* looks at ecologically sustainable agriculture not only for food but also as a ready sink for carbon. [www.newint.org](http://www.newint.org).

<sup>70</sup> ABARE briefings and government responses 2008.

<sup>71</sup> Jill Finnane *Lawns into Lunch* 2007.

<sup>72</sup> UN FAO International Conference on *Organic Agriculture and Food Security* 2-3 May 2007.

climate change brings about a change in oneself. Changing language from jungle to rainforest and from swamps to wetlands has helped many people become environmentally aware. Second, learning the language of climate change helps *develop one's ability to enter into the public arena, naming the issues, offering informed judgments and suggesting action*. It then becomes easy to move from language about climate systems, levels of carbon emissions, carbon sinks and the like, to speak about sustainable energy sources and compare options. Climate-sceptics and their shock-jocks will be shown to have no clothes. Some knowledge about developing renewable energy sources acts like a personal database from which to offer personal opinions, to assess morally acceptable solutions to climate change, and have a spring board for action in implementing them.<sup>73</sup>

Just as knowing where you want to go is the first step in choosing the right road, having a specific aim in greenhouse gas reductions is the first step to exploring options and taking action. Many scientists have suggested that *developed countries reduce carbon emissions 20-40% by the year 2020 and 60%+ by 2050 based in 1990 levels, and recently increased to 90%+*. The next aim is for the world to produce zero emissions; that is, all energy would come from renewable sources, including the energy used in its production. Australia's renewable energy production is just 8% and been at a standstill for more than a decade. The small increased production created by wind power and the like has been negated by reduction in hydro production due to lower dams following two decades of frequent droughts. On average, dry times where dams are sited will increase.

Energy efficiency is the easiest and quickest way to reduce carbon emissions. For example, when factories, homes, councils and the like use less electricity through efficiency gains, it means that less energy has to be produced at Australia's predominantly coal fired power stations. *Energy efficiency is like picking the low hanging fruit*. It is an area where ordinary people have some control about reducing their personal carbon foot print. The private sector has recognized this and begun to invest in the area. For example, carbon-offset businesses install energy efficient light globes in people's homes and do carbon trading with the credits they gather. Individuals can also act in the public arena as they promote car pooling and demand fast, frequent and comfortable public transport. Some cities have organised a 'turn-off-the-lights-hour' to demonstrate what savings can be made. Others plan to organise car free days.

The supply of 'base load' power, that is, power all day every day, is a major issue in power supply. That nuclear energy can handle base load demand is one of the arguments put forward in its promotion. Mark Diesendorf has written specifically on how *networked renewable energy sources can handle base load energy demand*. It will not all come from one source as with a coal powered power station. It means combining a bundle of renewable energy sources and then networking these sources. Some planners find this a messy solution. However, the technology is available today to do it as against waiting decades to develop questionable nuclear power or carbon storage solutions. Action can begin on these energy networks now.

Other likely renewable sources for supplying base power in Australia are hot-rock based steam turbines and tidal power. While the science is quite clear, these technologies need

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<sup>73</sup> In addition to the books of Tim Flannery (2005) and Mark Diesendorf (2007) on the Australian situation, good references include: *Clean Energy Future Group* 2004; *ACF Australia's Climate Change Strategy: the Real way Forward*, 2003; *Renewable Energy* and updated as *A Contribution to Australia's Environmental and Economic Sustainability*, June 2006 <http://www.rega.com.au/reports.htm>

more investment in scaling up the processes. The Federal Government's former chief scientist Dr Robin Batterham sees a great future for tidal power.<sup>74</sup> He even envisions a time after natural gas supplies have run out in the Kimberly area when its huge tides will supply the electricity to produce hydrogen as a portable export energy commodity.

### **Being Climate Change Truth-Tellers without Fear**

Satan as *the fathers of all lies* is one of the strongest condemnations given by Jesus in the Gospels. In our times, Jesus would have been in full prophetic flight as he confronted climate sceptics. They variously deny the science, impute base motives to those who speak out and offer spurious solutions. Confusion and inaction is their desired outcome.

Cardinal Martino as President of Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace based in Rome hosted eighty invited delegates to a Seminar to gather data on *Climate Change and Development* 26-27 April 2007.<sup>75</sup> Climate sceptics were invited as well as prominent church leaders. Who organized the invitation list is not clear but the Legionaries of Christ played a prominent role in the seminar. Firstly at the seminar, a scientist detailed the 2007 IPCC Reports concluding with a simple message: *Reverse human induced climate change or bear the consequences*. Face the truth. Then several political leaders appealed to the churches to offer moral criteria to help with judgments and motivation for action.

Conversation bogged down as half of the participants in the Rome Seminar kept repeating the climate-sceptics' litany - climate change is merely the result of natural cycles; the IPCC uses models that are not real science; blame China's factories, Indonesian forest fires and rising African populations; promote nuclear energy. Faced with this mantra from sceptics and lobbyists, even archbishops and other church leaders from around the world had to fight to be heard. Some such as Bishop Uhl from Poland cited personal experiences of nature and demonstrated an ecological sensitivity to scientific insights. The bishops were looking for help from the Seminar not only to build a pastoral response to climate change in their local communities but to *actively enter into the public debate*. Some called for a Papal encyclical on the environment and a Common Statement on Climate Change by ecumenical leaders.

The end result from the Roman Seminar was that climate sceptics, and those with vested interests, were only partially exposed as a block to an effective Catholic climate change response. They sowed enough confusion to nearly cause paralysis. Bishop Chris Toohey from Australia was the final speaker and said bluntly, even while smiling, *we know what we must do. Let's have the guts to do it*.

Sadly, climate sceptics deliberately play on people's good will and Christian compassion to peddle lies. They lead discussion down distracting ways with a litany that appears to show compassion: don't introduce carbon taxes because they rob the poor; don't deny scientific agriculture to developing nations like genetically modified crops and bio-fuel production. Sceptics use spurious religious sounding arguments – puny humans cannot alter God's providence and cause climate change; maybe carbon release is God's will as a purification of this evil world. Even people of good will committed to social welfare can be blinded to the ecological realities of climate change because of the obvious plight of the poor, and can be

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<sup>74</sup> ABC Radio National December 2007 No. 0612007

<sup>75</sup> *Hong Kong Examiner* 27 05 07; *The Tablet* 5 May 2007. [www.cathnews.com.au](http://www.cathnews.com.au) Father Charles Rue participated for the Columban Mission Society.

conned by the financial sector into quickly endorsing mechanisms such as carbon trading because they may help with social equity.<sup>76</sup>

Australia has not been spared as prominent Catholic journalists have supported the climate sceptics and written disparagingly of environmentalists, as have isolated church leaders offering warning about 'religious zealots from the church of climate change'. Cardinal George Pell's climate scepticism has been consistent. He displayed a poor grasp of science 06.01.08 in his *Catholic Weekly* editorial where he failed to distinguish between weather prediction and calculating climate trends, 'we need ... a healthy scepticism of all semi-religious rhetoric about climate change and especially about computer models for the future. It is very difficult to predict what the weather will be like next week, let alone in 10, 20 or 100 years.'

In truth, religiously based climate sceptics are heretical when tested against two decades of Catholic environmental teaching. Pell's attitude contrasts with the warning of Pope Benedict in his Peace Day Message 2008, Nos. 8-9, 'For the human family, this home is earth ... humanity today is rightly concerned about the ecological balance of tomorrow.' Jesus condemned the Pharisees for neglecting the weightier matters of the Law. The modern church must address matters of substance, and climate change is the pervasive issue that the human family must act on now to secure its future.

Sadly, ordinary Catholics are put in a difficult position when their religious leaders say strange things. How can ordinary believers show respect while also being truth tellers? The writings of Dr Kubler Ross on *death and dying* may help in understanding climate sceptics. Faced with trauma in their lives, people often go through stages of denial, anger, blame and bargaining before they come to terms with the truth. With climate change as the outcome of planet warming, the pattern of life we knew is dying. Hopefully denial, anger, blame and bargaining will give way to transformation as individuals and communities create new patterns of responsible living. If they do not, Catholic moral integrity and church credibility will suffer even more.

### **Fostering Government Leadership in Action on Climate Change**

Governments have a foundational role to *set benchmarks in addressing climate change and frame laws that foster community co-operation and individual action*. Citizens need processes of participation in setting these benchmarks. During the Howard years, a culture of secrecy and shutting out democratic scrutiny white anted government bureaucracies, even those operating under State Labour parties and Local Councils. Beside peoples' participation, representatives of business and unions must be engaged. Major unions, such as the electrical and maritime unions in the tradition of Jack Mundy of the Green-bans fame, argue that green jobs will secure long-term employment. Not all unions have held the nation to ransom as has the forestry division of the CMFEU union.

Some call for a 'war on climate change'. While the aim is clear, such language perpetuates an aggressive stance towards nature and our image of it as an enemy. The world does not need any more wars on anything. A better sentiment might be to humbly listen to what the climate is telling us so we can turn our gaze onto ourselves and government frameworks – *ZERO CO2: Australians united to address climate change*.

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<sup>76</sup> Michael Raper, President of Welfare Rights Centre, spoke at the 2008 Jesuit Lenten Seminar Series, 'Climate Change: Who pays the price'.

- To begin with by way of example, as major purchasers of goods and services the three levels of government can *preferentially choose greenhouse gas reducing procurements, buildings and energy options*.
- While 'greenwash' is a part of PR spin, *misleading advertising that goes beyond normal 'puffing'* to cash in on citizens' ecological concern must be tightly legislated against.<sup>77</sup>
- Australia must continue to *support international structures* that help reduce global warming, such as UN's IPCC, and the Treaties on Biodiversity and World Heritage. These take precedence over trade agreements. Signing the Kyoto Protocol has been a good first step but blaming developing countries is not a way forward.<sup>78</sup>
- The government can *redirect investment within Australia* by such measures as putting a cap on carbon emissions and setting renewable energy targets. Business will do what it knows best if it has some investment certainty. However, caution is needed to reign in the market based cowboys who manipulate shares through stock exchange conventions (Australian 7.03.08).
- Tax reform will be part of the mix of government measures in Australia to finance new ways. The whole of *Australia needs to benefit from the mineral-boom windfall*, and, *inflationary money washing around in the system needs to be redirected* into national projects addressing climate change - education, grants for energy efficient housing etc.
- Governments have a critical role as catalysts for research and development of alternative energy sources to address the peak oil crisis and lessen greenhouse gas emissions. Australia's former head scientist has suggested on ABC radio that government levels of *finance for research and science in the universities needs to increase forty times over*. This finance would need to be free of political interference and intellectual property disputes.
- *Sharing as foreign aid ecologically sustainable technologies willingly and without patents* is a major part of an Australian response to climate change, especially in the south western Pacific.<sup>79</sup> Aid is not mere investment.<sup>80</sup> Two NGOs developed 12 recommendations for foreign aid which in part asked for 1/ carbon impact disclosure of whole-of-institution targets, and 2/ phasing out support for fossil fuel aid projects leading to a moratorium.<sup>81</sup>
- The increasingly large Australian defence budget can well be re-evaluated in the wider contexts of foreign aid, genuine security, oil shortages and climate change. The nation cannot limit its reflection on peace to governance issues and border security. *Creating a just world is the only real way to grow lasting peace, protect the environment, supply alterative energy and manage the effects of climate change*.
- Mega-cities are both vulnerable to large scale damage from extreme climate events, such as the Sydney hail storm, and perpetuate inefficient infrastructure design. Proposals to build a chain of new cities linked by fast rail and supported by industries focused on alternative technologies warrants urgent discussion. With government leadership, such

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<sup>77</sup> [www.choice.org.au](http://www.choice.org.au)

<sup>78</sup> Climate issue is 'inherently international' and wealthy have to help poorer countries (Wendy Frew SMH 9.08.02). Dr Raj Rachauri director of Tata Energy Research and Chain of IPCC at ACU Narayanan Oration said 'What is good for India is good for the world' (SMH 10 08 07)

<sup>79</sup> McDonagh, Sean *Life: Creation or Commodity? The Case Against Patents on Living Things* Catholic Social Justice Series, ACSJC, 2001, no. 41; Sean McDonagh, *Sean Patenting Life? Stop Dublin*: Dominican Publications 2003. Dave DeFusco *Program to encourage 'green' industry in developing countries* <http://environment.yale.edu>

<sup>80</sup> Debra Jopson, 'Phantom aid' that never leaves Australian shores has often been handled by the Export Finance Insurance Corporation (EFIC), SMH 28.05.07.

<sup>81</sup> AidWatch in cooperation with the Mineral Policy Institute and Economy Network [www.aidwatch.org.au](http://www.aidwatch.org.au)

*decentralisation would spread the risk as well as fire the imagination of Australians planners to design appropriate infrastructure and create long term employment.*<sup>82</sup>

### **Responding to Climate Change Deepens Catholic Faith and its Evangelizing Mission**

Responding to climate change is opening a new chapter in the evolving Catholic Story. Cardinal John Henry Newman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in *Development of Dogma* broadened ideas on the method by which Catholic faith grows. This growth is a work of the Holy Spirit as it guides the *senus fidelium* of the church. Catholics of all ranks discern Spirit given truth in a process of dialogue with the events and people of each age, and such discernment is a communal Catholic calling which is guided by church leaders as servants of the People of God. This theme was often taken up by the Vatican II Council under the umbrella of *church renewal in a new reading of the signs of the times*.<sup>83</sup> The Council made very clear that the Holy Spirit is indeed the principal agent of the Church's mission and recognized that the history of humanity has known many major turning points which have encouraged new missionary outreach. The Church, guided by the Spirit, responded to them and grew in its understanding and expression of faith in the process.<sup>84</sup> Pope Benedict invites us to let our hearts 'be stretched'.<sup>85</sup>

The temptation to do nothing is powerful: leave it to others to take the lead in choosing an energy efficient house or car, or to do the sums about energy use or food consumption. And there is always the temptation to give way to various form of the *selfish 'me' culture, I'm all right Jack* or *NYMBY (not in my backyard), or despair that nothing can be done*. The number of empty bedrooms people keep in their homes might be a test of personal moral integrity.<sup>86</sup>

Individual knowledge about the causes and effects of climate change might well lead to a revival of the Catholic tradition of voluntary self restraint. A modern and relevant form of the traditional Friday Penance based on the virtue of deciding 'enough' could be created. Such a revival would resonate with Friday as the primary prayer day for Muslims and help create interfaith solidarity in facing climate change.

Specifically addressing climate change in 1996 Pope John Paul II spoke to the European Bureau for the Environment saying, *We face a fundamental question ... both ethical and ecological ... How can one prevent disasters that destroy the environment and threaten all forms of life?* Pope Benedict XVI in his 2007 Peace Message said *humanity ... must be increasingly conscious of the links between natural ecology, or respect for nature, and human ecology*. Dogma grows. Cardinal Martino in his closing address to the 2007 Roman Seminar on Climate Change and Development said, *This seminar deepens doctrinal reflection as Gospel meets life in society ... the Gospel is always new, adapting as historical conditions change*.

A major theme of World Youth Day in Sydney 2008 (WYD2008) is evangelization and mission. A local group of young people have proposed that WYD be an environmentally friendly event by way of the physical materials used since the style of the event itself speaks to the world. More significant, however, would be to name *dialogue with environmentalists and cooperative commitment to action on climate change as central to the WYD2008 message and*

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<sup>82</sup> Prof Julian Disney advises Australian governments on affordable housing, including decentralisation.

<sup>83</sup> Vatican II, *Constitution of the Church -Lumen Gentium* No. 12 and 25.

<sup>84</sup> John Paul II, *Mission of the Redeemer* Nos. 21 and 30

<sup>85</sup> Benedict XVI, *Peace Day Message 2008*, No. 33.

<sup>86</sup> Sunanda Creagh, SMH 8.08.07

*evangelizing outreach.* At the macro level, the church's mission is to witness to what God is doing in each age, and now is the era for making a responsible and faith filled response to climate change. At the practical level of the WYD agenda, as youth from around the globe gather it would be seen as a truly catholic event with a catholic message if they focused on the human family's common home, Earth, and the climate challenge. Speaking as the Holy See's permanent observer to the UN 14 February 2008 Archbishop Migliore said,

*The challenge of climate change is at once individual, local, national and global. Accordingly, it urges a multi-level coordinated response ... my delegation, therefore, commends the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for providing a global framework for concerted international action to mitigate climate change and to adapt to its impacts.*

The question is simple - will the call for Catholics to cooperate in the light of faith in finding solutions to climate change as the major problem of the modern world be loud and clear at WYD2008?

A great gift of the Second Vatican Council was the revival of the Adult Catechumenate (RCIA) and it became the touch stone for church life in many countries like South Korea. More than liturgical rites, the RCIA is a systematic way for Catholic communities and individuals to engage society in a spiritual journey of conversion. *Listening to the spiritual history of people with a sensitivity to environmental issues* not only respects their journey but challenges the individual sponsors and Catholic community to grow in appreciation of what the Holy Spirit is saying in the lives of others and this age. In dialogue, both sides change and new relationships are born. The RCIA ritual asks that the catechist respect the place from which the enquirer is coming from before teaching begins. In this process, witness to the Catholic tradition goes hand in hand with listening in a spirit of dialogue, a spirit well outlined by Pope John Paul II in his mission encyclicals. Dialogue with the world of environmentalists is part of integral Catholic catechesis.

History shows examples of how *new religious eras emerged after major climate events*, that is, social upheaval followed by new spiritual stories and religious sensibilities.<sup>87</sup> The collapse of early civilizations is clearly connected with changes in vegetation following climate change. The flight of Abram from Ur which led to the First Covenant followed closely on from social disruption in the region after major 13th century BC climate change. In the 4th century AD atmospheric dimming led to crops failures and mass migrations, including the barbarian invasion of Europe which hastened the collapse of the Roman Empire. What followed was a revamp of Western Christianity including the 5<sup>th</sup> century response of the Irish monastic missionaries like St Columban to re-civilise Europe. The rise of Islam belongs to this period in a new religious response to social change as itinerant tribes strove to build stable settlements. In the 14th century global warming and plagues led to social disorder and contributed to a questioning of traditional Christian responses. The Protestant Reformation soon followed and a new Christian era also began for the Roman Rite.

Even prescinding from the impacts of climate change on life as we know it, the rapid decline in fossil fuel supplies is enough of itself to turn the world upside down, an turn religious formulations on their heads. The production of oil is already declining as reserves are being

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<sup>87</sup> Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall, *Abrupt Climate Change*, Feb 2004. Brian M Fagan, *Floods, Famines and Emperors* 1999, *Ancient Civilisations* 2002, *People of the Earth* 2006, These books focus on business futures and national security. Schwartz's foundational book was, *The Art of the Long View*, Doubleday 1991 and *The Little Ice Age – 1300-1850*, Basic Books 2002. [www.nede.noaa.gov/paleo](http://www.nede.noaa.gov/paleo)

pumped dry. *The time of what is termed 'peak oil' has arrived.* Peak oil is having an obvious impact on rising transport costs – car, trucks, ships, planes – and costs will become almost prohibitive, changing our accepted way of living. More fundamental is the impact of oil shortages on food production, its transport and processing. Presently, ample food supplies depend on fossil fuels and fossil based chemicals. Just as peak oil food prices rise, food availability will decline. Oil shortages will also impact heavily on pharmaceuticals, even down to their oil based containers. The question arises: how does the Catholic community respond to the reality of peak oil. Will it preach wisdom, prudence, discernment and pre-emptive action, or, will it just stay silent and wait around to help pick up the pieces when the crisis strikes? History has judged such religious approaches harshly. Such religion is judged irrelevant while new ones are embraced.

Research into the paleo-climatic impacts of sudden climate change on religious thought throughout history warrants exploration, especially for Catholics in a post Vatican II spirit.<sup>88</sup> With the emerging 21st century climate change crisis, *what new social and resultant new spiritual order might evolve?* Might a new spirituality combine compassion both for Earth and People as indicated by Pope John Paul II in his 1990 succinct Peace Day Statement? Might a new spiritual era delight in humbly learning from and living in harmony with God's gift of Earth?

### **Conclusion**

Remembering that that vast majority of scientists and planners suggest that *developed countries urgently aim to reduce carbon emissions 20-40% by the year 2020 and 60+% by 2050 based in 1990 levels*, Catholics are challenged to make a credible response in helping all peoples achieve these targets. The Climate Change challenges all people about a matter of substance and challenges Catholics in particular as Pope Benedict says in his recent encyclical to be people of hope, rooted in the realities of history and not escapist fantasies. As was said at the beginning of this paper, Catholics are being led by the Spirit into new mission task for our times to:

- Be Truth Tellers: welcoming knowledge about Earth's systems and the consequence of human induced climate change as advances in truth;
- Be Spiritual Visionaries: accepting changing patterns of climate as another chapter in cosmic revelation and a new turn in encountering God;
- Be Just and Compassionate: committing to challenge economic structures that disrupt Earth's ecological systems as a continuation of healing social disruption especially among the world's poor;
- Be Active: leading the way in a commitment to new ways of living lightly on the earth.

Prayer for the guidance of God's Spirit to *renew the face of the Earth* is central to Catholics making individual and community responses to climate change – come Holy Spirit.<sup>89</sup> They have the example of Mary who responded to the Spirit and willing agreed to act as God wanted, and who asked others to do what her Son asked. In praying her Magnificat and

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<sup>88</sup> John Paul II *Mission of the Redeemer* no 30 *the history of humanity has known many major turning points which have encouraged missionary outreach.*

<sup>89</sup> "The Holy Spirit is indeed the principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission ... The history of humanity has known many major turning points which have encouraged missionary outreach, and the Church, guided by the Spirit, has always responded to them with generosity and farsightedness." John Paul II, *Mission of the Redeemer*, No. 21.

honouring her role as Mother, she can help lead Catholics to respect this planet that nurtures us all and to rightly call it *mother Earth*.<sup>90</sup>

The *ecological conversion* spoken of by Pope John Paul II will require courage as believers choose to make sacrifices and change life styles to reconnect with nature's rhythms.<sup>91</sup> They will have to empty themselves as God chose to do in taking on flesh in Christ Jesus, but in doing so they will help bring the transformation that leads to the fullness of life God wishes for all peoples and the world in the Cosmic Lord.

### **Climate Change Prayer**

*God, Creator and Sustainer,  
free us from ignorance about your gift of Earth.*

*Inspire us to act together in respect for your gift and change our ways  
as we relate to Earth's rhythms with humility.*

*May we welcome the truth when scientists speak of climate change, and  
reject false pathways designed to confuse.*

*At this point in history, help us to urge our politicians to take moral decisions and  
urgent action in negotiating sustainable living.*

*Ground all our thoughts in your revealing Scriptures and the wisdom of holy women  
and men who have gone before us  
to help build a new creation as followers of your Cosmic Son.*

*Give us a discerning spirit to work with the ecological and the human,  
the social and the economic realities of this world, and  
instil in us a spirit of respect and compassion able to imagine pathways of harmony. Amen.*

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<sup>90</sup> "Nature itself, from being 'mater' (mother), is now reduced to being 'matter', and is subjected to every kind of manipulation." John Paul II

<sup>91</sup> "The Jubilee is a further summons to conversion of heart through a change of life. It is a reminder to all that they should give absolute importance neither to the goods of the Earth, since these are not God, nor to man's domination or claim to domination, since the Earth belongs to God and to him alone (Leviticus 25:23)." John Paul II, Bull *Proclaiming Great Jubilee* 1998 no 12.