

EVANGELISATION



Witnessing Christ in the World

No. 8

Environmental dialogue

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Matt 6:26



Fr Frank Carey at C.E.L.L.

There are no jobs on a dead planet...

Jobs and the Environment Seminar, 11.12.04.

Reading the signs of these times when the earth is groaning under the labours of human activity, to witness Christ in the world today should involve dialogue about the environment. We can listen and learn from scripture, theologians, Church teaching, scientists, "greenies" and those of other faiths.

"The endangered Earth demands a new prophetic way of being missionaries."

Columban Statement on Climate Change, Manila 2007

What will we hand on?

The Centre for Ecozoic Living and Learning (C.E.L.L) in Silang, Philippines has grown from a monoculture property to a self-sustaining environmental learning centre which is based on permaculture principles. 35,000 visitors have been to the CELL retreat centre since it began seven years ago. The concept creator, Fr Frank Carey explains, "We tell the story of creation, not so much from the scientific angle as from the perspective of wonder of creation. This is where we live and learn to respond to this life-giving gift from God by making it life-giving. In this way we learn to care for the earth so it can care for us. We show school students and retreatants the modules for more sustainable living we have established. We explain the relationship between one aspect of farming and another. People can see how permaculture is about designing how and where things are grown so that minimum effort is expended in maintaining it."

Fellow Australian, Columban Fr Dom Nolan describes the motivation of C.E.L.L. as a "dedication to doing sensible agriculture." He defines this as being "non-destructive of resources and looking primarily to what we can bequeath to coming generations."

Our mission: To protect the radical good of life in all its manifestations and to prepare an environment for future generations that is closer to the plan of the Creator.

Social Justice Sunday Statement 2002, A New Earth: The Environmental Challenge



FEN speakers at the forum: "Climate Change and Our Buildings".

Faith Ecology Network (FEN)

Recognising the benefit of people from different religious traditions sharing their mutual appreciation of ecology, Fr Charles Rue of the Columban Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice initiated a forum at the Australian Catholic University, Sydney in 2003 on the theme of "Wonder and the Will to Care". From representatives of Aboriginal, Anglican, Catholic, Uniting Church, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Islamic and Baha'i traditions, FEN was formed.

Using the internet and conducting public forums, the network members have since contributed different faith insights about aspects of common concern and interest: water, food, peace, care for the earth, and climate change. As a coalition, we have produced statements of common belief and commitments about these topics. Over time, co-operation on environmental matters has grown. Among the different religious traditions we have found a common belief that the Earth is a gift from a power beyond us called God by many, and acknowledge that we have responsibilities towards the Earth.

The Columban Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice currently facilitates FEN

"The web of life on Earth is under threat from accelerated climate change. That web compares to a seamless garment and it needs the application of a consistent ethic to protect it."

Climate Change - Our responsibility to Sustain God's Earth, Bishops Committee for Justice Development Ecology and Peace 2005

The science of ecology has opened a new window on the Mystery of Christ as Archbishop Bathersby said at the launch of Catholic Earthcare Australia. We should be grateful for a long line of scientists like Rachael Carson who wrote *"The Silent Spring"* in 1962. In her day she called people to reconnect with the land and stop filling farms and waterways with chemical poisons. Father Thomas Berry responded with his *"New Story"* which offered a new spiritual pathway, new wine and new wine skins. All that God made is good and the foundation of God's work, says the Catechism. We know that creation opened up a deep spiritual pathway for St Francis of Assisi and many saints. That pathway was developed through a practice of reverence for the gift of Earth and deep courtesy for Life in all its diversity. The Scriptures often tell of the beauty of creation. Yet Scripture speaks even more about the wisdom of God embodied in Earth. "If you would learn, speak to the cattle and the birds." (Job 12.7). Jesus was aware of this wisdom as the basis of his teaching in parables, and happy are those who see and live by that wisdom. However, environmental abuse is a curse that puts the Lord to the test. That abuse is optimised in our day by human-induced climate change. We humans have forgotten who we are: part of the web of life, dependent on the earth and interdependent with all creation. Pope Benedict has called for intensified cooperation to build an alliance between human beings and the environment. Disciples of Jesus are called to a spiritual quest which embraces ecological wisdom. Our work is to find our proper place in the universe. The scientists in our day have scattered new seed. It is up to us to be the fertile ground which yields thirty or a hundred fold. There is a beautiful invitation in the Adult Catechumenate which says, 'Come and see!'



"We are called to an ecological conversion, to be good news for the poor and for the planet."
Columban Statement on Climate Change, Manila 2007

Everywhere we look, human activities are tearing at the very fabric of life on Earth.
David Suzuki

Prayer

May the Spirit surprise you like a dove from above, or a swallow from below, but now and then like a blue wren!

"We are part of the interconnected community of creation, inter-related with all other creatures."
Fr Dennis Edwards,
Catholic Earthcare Conference 2005

What Can I Do?

"Where are you now that we need you Noah? We've all become endangered species now."
Dermot Dorgan.
How can you be a Noah?

Reconnect with nature:
join Landcare, bushwalking or bush care groups.

Do an audit of your energy use
www.catholicearthcareoz.net

In NSW, join FEN, faith_ ecology_network_subscribe@yahoo.com.au
In other States, start a FEN.

Learn More @

- At Catholic Earthcare Australia www.catholicearthcareoz.com:
1. Read *"Climate Change and Pastoral Commitments"* (Bishop Chris Toohey's address to the 2007 Vatican Conference on Climate Change and Development)
2. Find out what the Vatican is doing and saying.
- Read *"Ecology at the Heart of Faith"*, Dennis Edwards, 2006
- Find out about *"Seasons of Creation"* www.seasonofcreation.com
- Maroubra Junction Uniting Church's *"Green Church"* project www.mjuniting.org.au
- Australian Interfaith Statement on Climate Change www.climateinstitute.org.au
- Faith and Climate Change, Rev Sally Bingham www.climateinstitute.org.au
- Catholic Conservation Center <http://conservation.catholic.org>
- Sound of Many Waters www.soundofmanywaters.org

“ Chat Points: ”

- What holds the climate skeptics back in denial?
- Discuss: "The Catholic Church can contribute to the environmental movement in unique and much needed ways," Bishop Chris Toohey.
- What can the Church learn from the environmental movement?
- What is the new spirituality connecting humans and Earth life systems?
- The poor suffer the most from environmental problems. Discuss the connections between ecology and social justice.

