

Watermark

Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (NSW)

Green issues

becoming white noise?

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Introduction

Over the past ten years increasing public awareness about global warming and climate change has meant that hearing news about ‘green issues’ has become as common as hearing the sports update or weather report. But like many matters that we encounter daily, ecological issues can start to become white noise, fading into the background of our busy lives. This is an understandable circumstance, especially if our immediate response is to put climate change in the “too hard” basket. But the truth is that each of us contributes to global warming, so each of us *can* make a vital contribution to halting its negative effects.

Now more than ever, green issues need to be at the forefront of our consciousness. Current research reveals that predicted changes in global temperatures are occurring sooner than expected. Climate change is an urgent issue threatening to spiral out of our control, unless we act now and every day. Indeed, every day that we delay being part of the solution, we continue to be part of the problem.

So in this issue of *Watermark* we suggest some important ways you can rethink your relationship with the environment. By connecting to the Earth in a different way, we come to a new appreciation of our role in protecting and caring for it. With a fresh focus we can bring green issues back into the limelight of our lives.

A new heart for a new world

Climate change is often discussed in complex scientific terms. Its effects are illustrated with facts and figures, graphs and charts. But climate change is fundamentally a human issue with both its cause and its solution lying in the simple actions and interactions of human beings. Coming to accept the responsibility that comes with this power to change the world around us is perhaps the greatest hurdle currently facing the human race.

We know that climate change and global warming are urgent problems, and there are countless resources available to help us become greener global citizens, but many of us still find it hard to act. What we need is not necessarily more information about climate change, but rather a deeper understanding of how it relates to us.

We can do this by deepening and reinvigorating our relationship with the Earth. One of the simplest ways to become more enviro-conscious is to let the environment have an impact on your daily life. If we spend most of our time at home or in the office, our sense of our relationship with the Earth is diminished. The simple act of sitting quietly in a garden and watching nature at work can give other simple actions, such as switching on a light or boiling a jug of water, a new significance.

To be a part of the environment that we are striving to save is one of the most positive actions we can take to slow global warming. If we want to affect climate change, we need to let it affect us.

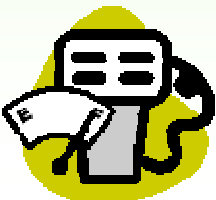


Consider...

1. How do you interact with the environment on a daily basis?
2. Think about some of these interactions. Do they have positive or destructive consequences?
3. Are there ways that you could change your destructive behaviours? How?
4. What might be stopping you from making this change? Is it important?
5. At the end of each day, what are the three ways that the environment touched you today?

The real cost of petrol

It is impossible to ignore the fact that petrol prices have risen drastically over the past couple of years. Even for those who do not feel the pinch at the petrol pump, everyone is affected by price rises in food and other necessities due to increased transport costs. While it is natural to resist this financial pressure, it has been disappointing to hear some Australian politicians arguing over ways to reduce the cost of petrol. It is pertinent to keep in mind that the price of petrol reflects a greater cost – the cost to our environment – which grows as our emissions increase.



While Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has tried to implement some measures to reduce the cost of

petrol, he recently took a stand against leaving petrol out of the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) which will be implemented in 2010. Petrol prices will rise even further once the ETS comes into affect, but Rudd maintained that the Government must “do what was right for the future”.

Investment in the manufacture of hybrid petrol-electric cars in Australia has been another initiative of the Rudd Government. The transport sector in Australia contributes to a staggering 13.5 percent of the country’s total greenhouse emissions, meaning that anything we can do to reduce our petrol consumption is a good thing.

Resources

Phillip Coorey ‘Climate change comes before petrol prices: Rudd’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, June 26 2008.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/settlements/transport/fuelguide/environment.html>

A spirit of change

As well as interacting with nature on a daily basis, one way to reconnect with the environment is to remember our vocation as caretakers of the Earth. Being environmentally conscious is not only a social and a moral responsibility, but for Christian people, it is a job given to us by God. Throughout history, several different interpretations have been put forward about how human beings were intended to treat the Earth. Many early readings of the Bible felt that human beings' "dominion" over God's creation could justifiably be carried out in a destructive way. But more recently, the concept of stewardship has been promoted as the truer interpretation of God's call to human beings.



In 1990 Pope John Paul II began calling all Catholics to an "ecological conversion", highlighting the fact that protecting the planet's natural environmental balance is not only an issue for scientists, but for all people. Being given the task of caring for the world around us is a huge honour and a huge responsibility. If we take this responsibility seriously then adopting greener habits will be a matter of course.

It has been encouraging that as awareness about climate change has grown, the Church has played an active part in promoting sustainability among its members and within its institutions. The inclusion of "polluting" on the updated list of the Seven Deadly Sins is just one indication of how seriously the Catholic Church is treating ecological issues.

Green house of God

Formed by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference in 2002, **Catholic Earthcare Australia** has been dedicated to achieving "ecological conversion" in parishes across Australia.

A renewed dedication to the environment is not unique to the Catholic Church, and green issues have been a source of ecumenical cooperation throughout Christian Churches in Australia. In an effort to make God's house a green house, Catholic Earthcare Australia has been promoting the use of the 'Seven Steps to Sustainability' which were developed by Geoff Callahan of the Uniting Church in Maroubra.

This simple approach to achieving sustainability in churches, and in the wider faith community, is producing positive results in many parishes. The key to its success is the involvement of passionate leaders. We urge all readers of *Watermark* to think about how your parish or congregation is responding to the call for "ecological conversion" and consider whether you could be the green representative your faith community needs.

To find out more information about the Seven Steps to Sustainability and how you could be involved within your parish, visit the Catholic Earthcare Australia website and follow the link "Parishes".
<http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net>

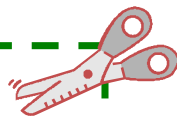


My commitments...

I commit to _____

When I need help I will _____

Every time I do something good for the environment I will think of _____



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We are on the Web!
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You can read past
issues of
Watermark
on our website!

Afternoon Teas for the Future



Climate change can be a source of worry in everyday life, but the Edmund Rice Centre, through their 'Afternoon Teas for the Future' program, have found a way to put a pleasant spin on this troubling issue.

The Afternoon Teas for the Future began in 2005 and have been growing steadily since. The 2008 program began in March, but it's not too late to get on board.

Participants meet on the first Tuesday of each month to discuss issues of climate change and sustainability in a friendly and inspiring environment. The gatherings provide an opportunity for people concerned about climate change to come together, so that they can deepen their knowledge on the issues, share their experiences about actions taken and, where appropriate, plan actions for the future.

The meetings take place at the Edmund Rice Centre, 9 Alexandria St, Croydon, on the first floor. They run from 2pm to approximately 4pm, and all are welcome to attend. If you are interested and would like to receive an invitation to the next gathering, please contact Leonie Cornell at leoniec@erc.org.au.

Leading the green way

The question of leadership has always been an important one with regards to acting on climate change. At this year's G8 conference in Japan, some of the world's most powerful political leaders have been arguing over when and by what percentages their country's carbon emissions should be reduced. Meanwhile, the report delivered by Australia's climate change expert Ross Garnaut clearly indicates that dramatic action must be taken *now* to reduce the emissions that cause global warming.

The reality is that no one country can wait for another to act before accepting responsibility for fighting climate change. As Garnaut's report highlights, the consequences of Australia waiting to act would be dire for both our environment and economy.

We encourage you to express your support for the Australian Government's urgent measures to reduce carbon emissions by writing to your local member, to PM Kevin Rudd and to the Minister for the Environment, Peter Garrett. We also encourage you to share your views with Opposition Leader Brendan Nelson and Shadow Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, Greg Hunt.

Links and Ways to Help!

Finding green products

<http://www.greenelectricityw.at.ch.org.au/>

Simple ways to reduce your carbon footprint

<http://www.carbonfootprint.com>

<http://www.energysave.energyaustralia.com.au/>

Find out more about the Emissions Trading Scheme

<http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/index.html>

Calculate your fuel consumption (and then reduce it!)

<http://www.environment.gov.au/settlements/transport/fuelguide/environment.html>

Catholic Earthcare Australia

<http://www.catholicearthcare.oz.net>

Seven Steps to Sustainability Fact Sheet

http://www.climateinstitute.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=52&Itemid=39

Members of Parliament contact details

<http://www.australia.gov.au/>