

HOW FAR?

HOW MUCH FURTHER?



Those of us who have travelled or walked long distances often find ourselves, as we pause on our way to our destination, looking back at how far we have come and looking forward to how much further we have to travel.

Today, as I write this, is the 50th anniversary of the **first Earth Day** when 20 million Americans (nearly 10% of the US population at the time) gathered for the first time to agitate for change in the way their environment was being degraded by Industry. The thousands of celebrations, demonstrations and teach-ins that occurred that day are credited with the birth of the modern environmental movement. Had not public gatherings been cancelled by the Covid-19 crisis the anticipated involvement worldwide in Earth Day 2020 would have been 1 billion persons or more than 1 in 9 of the world's population.

On that first day the Rev Paul Hetrich (now 86) senior pastor at Salem Zion United Church of Christ addressed the condemnation of historian Lynn White. White had argued that Christianity and religion, in emphasizing humankind's dominion over nature, was largely at the root of environmental destruction. Hetrich included these words in his sermon:

*" The church also is involved in **Earth Week** because some of its poor theology has helped to cause the ecological imbalance that we are facing in nature today. We have always, for the last several hundred years, addressed ourselves to the theme of progress as a theological principle. And we have believed and affirmed that those people who do progress, God is certainly blessing. And because we have progressed and have not thought about the ways, the methods that we were using in order to progress, to grow into our technological expertise, we*

have plundered, we have raped, we have begun to lay the Earth in desolation'

In his catechesis on the 22nd April Pope Francis said Earth Day was "an occasion for renewing our commitment to love and care for our common home and for the weaker members of our human family."

"As the tragic coronavirus pandemic has taught us, we can overcome global challenges only by showing solidarity with one another and embracing the most vulnerable in our midst," he said.

As the Book of Genesis relates, he said, "we live in this common home as one human family in biodiversity with God's other creatures," and God has called on humanity to care for and respect his creation and "to offer love and compassion to our brothers and sisters, especially the most vulnerable among us, in imitation of God's love for us, manifested in his son Jesus."

God is good and always forgives, the pope said, however, "**The earth never forgives: if we have despoiled the earth, the response will be very bad.**"(my emphasis) Full report: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/creation-sacred-gift-deserving-respect-care-pope-says-earth-day>

The environmental movement has given us stronger environmental laws in developed countries with the community more inclined to take action to protect high profile issues.



Unfortunately, the implementation of environmental laws is weak in developing countries or in countries with dictatorial governments. In recent times conservative governments around the world have been weakening the application of environmental laws in favour of development.

In 1988 the environmental movement was, in part responsible for the formation in the United Nations, of the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) This body, regardless of the possible intention by the United States to limit the information and actions of the Council, has been fearless in presenting the data and predictions for the world's future as a result of Global warming. Currently predictions still stand at a world with nearly 4°C of warming by the end of this century. This would be catastrophic! Inland Australia would be unliveable!

Droughts and bushfires would be uncontrollable and in the North of our country floods would have wiped out any town built along river courses. Summertime temperatures in western Sydney would regularly exceed 50°C. Deaths due to temperature stress and tropical disease will have escalated well beyond the worst prediction of deaths from Covid-19.

But, economics and environmental action has meant that our most polluting power stations have closed and new coal fired stations will not be built as they are not economically viable. Environmental action has prevented the development of gas fracking in NSW but unfortunately, while we are involved with the Covid-19 crisis, Victoria passed regulations to allow on-shore gas exploration. Activists are still successful in preventing the development of the Adani coal mine even though both the Federal and Queensland governments have allowed development to proceed.

In 2015 Pope Francis promulgated **Laudato Si'**. Laudato Si' is so important because it does not simply address the climate crisis; it raises the need to respond to the crisis to a moral obligation to believers in acting for social justice. Early in the document, Francis states the principle, that he reiterates in this year's Earth Day address that the poor and weak will be those most affected. *In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: "Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest". Extract Para 48.* The Covid-19 pandemic is further evidence of the



vulnerability of the disadvantaged. In New York, infection rates are 6 times more prevalent in Afro-American populations compared with the more affluent white population.

Laudato Si' is not content with detailing the issues of climate change from an ethical and social justice viewpoint. No, it is one of the strongest and most passionate calls to action that a pontiff has issued in many years. It calls for action as individuals. It calls for community political action and it calls for action as humanity as part of the world wide web of interrelated creation.



AS INDIVIDUALS: *"Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment. A person who could afford to spend and consume more but regularly uses less... shows the kind of convictions and attitudes which help to protect the environment. There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions.*

AS A COMMUNITY *"Because the enforcement of laws is at times inadequate due to corruption, public pressure has to be exerted in order to bring about decisive political action. Society, through non-governmental organizations and intermediate groups, must put pressure on governments to develop more rigorous regulations, procedures and controls. Unless citizens control political power – national, regional and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment" LS Par 179*

AS HUMANITY *"Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth" para 92* We often end our mass by stating ' Go in peace to love one another" Laudato Si' challenges our expression of love. We cannot love if we cause harm to creation.

What can we do as Individuals? Pray and meditate # Study and learn from reputable sites # Be prepared to speak out; but do not waste your time or peace of mind on those who do not listen # Use public transport# reduce your intake of red meat # Buy local produce where possible # Car pool # Install roof top solar # Use carbon offsets

for travel and power # Reduce your purchase of consumer products # Buy quality products that last # reduce your waste stream # Recycle.

What can we do as part of community?

Support the school strikes # Join or support action groups on climate change e.g. ARRCC, Getup, ACF # Write to your bishop requesting

greater action # Write to your local federal and state member supporting stronger environmental laws and action on renewables# Support action for a carbon neutral Australia well before 2050# Write to the Prime Minister, The Energy Minister and their shadows demanding no new coal mines or on shore gas projects, Demand a fair retraining or retrenchment of displaced workers.



How far have we travelled? How far must we go?

(Peter Clarke, Friend of Carmelites, and member of SS Peter & Paul Parish, Kiama)

Take heart; listen to Isaiah “ Behold I am doing a new thing, now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”(Is 43;19)



BE INFORMED! AND TAKE ACTION:

In his book ‘**Super-Power**’ Prof. Ross Garnaut ” (La Trobe University Press in association with Black Inc. 2019) Ross states:

“*The most rigorous, comprehensive and influential treatment of the ethics of climate change is Pope Francis’s 2015 encyclical Laudato Si.*”

** **Laudato Si** sees climate change imposing costs disproportionately on people in poor countries and poor people in all countries and thus as a social justice issue...

** **Laudato Si** argues that humans have a responsibility to take care of the natural environment, both as something important to humanity and as something valuable in itself..”

Garnaut goes on to state “*John Broome, professor of moral philosophy at Oxford University, has reached the strong conclusion that ethical behaviour requires each individual to take responsibility for his or her own emissions by eliminating them or offsetting them.*”



RISING SEAS ... A GLOBAL CHALLENGE ...

Video from the Carmelite NGO

<https://www.carmelites.org.au/jpic>

Land loss is happening now in Louisiana. Economic distress is a terrible consequence.



Ecological Conversion



“**Ecological Conversion**” is a small book of 37 brief reflections written by Carmelite, Eduardo Agosta Scarel, and published by the Carmelite NGO at the UN. It offers some reflections to encourage us to take an active care for the environment, the earth, our common home.

LINK is <https://www.carmelites.org.au/item/718-ecological-conversion>

Prayer for the fifth anniversary of Laudato Si'

*Loving God,
Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them,
You created us in your image and made us stewards of all your creation, of our common home.
You blessed us with the sun, water and bountiful land
so that all might be nourished.
Open our minds and touch our hearts,
so that we may attend to your gift of creation.
Help us to be conscious that our common home belongs not only to us,
but to all future generations, and that it is our responsibility to preserve it.
May we help each person secure the food and resources that they need.
Be present to those in need in these trying times,
especially the poorest and those most at risk of being left behind.
Transform our fear, anxiety and feelings of isolation into hope
so that we may experience a true conversion of the heart.
Help us to show creative solidarity in addressing the consequences of this global pandemic,
Make us courageous to embrace the changes that are needed in search of the common good,
Now more than ever may we feel that we are all interconnected,
in our efforts to lift up the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*

We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen