

## Saving the planet - a Christian response

*“When I see the heavens, the work of your Hands  
the moon and stars which you arranged  
what is Man that You should keep him in mind  
mortal man that You should care for him?  
Yet You made him little less than a god  
With honour and glory, you crowned him  
gave him power over the works of your hands  
put all things under his feet.” Psalm 8*

The earth and its fulness, fruitfulness, its beauty and sometimes its savagery have been given to us so that we can become good stewards of all that we have been given. We have been called to make the earth serve us, to be at our disposal, but for a purpose. We were called to make it bear fruit, to multiply its resources and to use it wisely.

We have NOT been called to exploit it or destroy it making it increasingly unusable.

There is no doubt that we have to have a creative use of it. We have to eat, we have to build, we have to protect it assets and all that is within it. We also have to understand how it works and what is the best way to make it yield a ‘rich harvest’ in every sense of that word, both to nourish ourselves and to enjoy its beauty and loveliness.

Our planet is one of many in the cosmos and it has been endowed with enormous resources and advantages.

Within our planet and solar system we have patterns of nature that ensure a variety of weather and climate, types of vegetation, and degrees of which can be utilised by man and means to heat, and make things that heal. The extent of this is only slowly becoming evident as we start to deplete the more obvious means of ‘survival’. Within our green and luscious earth are many resources with a value that we simply have not discovered or are willing to use, rushing to the more obvious and financially exploitable.

How many thousands more would have died had Sir Alexander Fleming not discovered mold, which can save lives, leading to the discovery of Penicillin.

Foxglove, Digitalis, can be used to protect the heart. The knowledge of rotating crops enabled a better, non-exploitable means of growing things and replenishing the soil. The use of animals, not just for consumption but also for carriage, means of transport and assistance (guide dogs, comfort etc) have helped many. Every part of nature has a specific use even if we are not always aware of it. We are constantly finding new things which are simple and effective.

Protecting and using the earth wisely clearly is a call of each Christian. It is an earth we share with each other and with all that grows in and within it. As man has become more technologically advanced and more aware of the earth’s potential it has also both given advantages to Man but also the real dilemma of the use of sparse or unevenly distributed resources to both feed and satisfy the growing number of people that now share our planet.

But it has also revealed in a very particular way, the greed and exploitive nature of Man. Questions such as ‘how can this or that best be used for mankind in general are often replaced by.. ‘how much material benefit can I or my country make use of this or that resource for our benefit and not the benefit of all’.

Simultaneously the issue of potential scarcity and the effects of overuse does not enter into the affray. A good example here is the cutting down, without replacement of trees, without the realisation of the effects that this has on climate. The essential balance of nature is affected by our need for wealth, forgetting the basic exchanges of oxygen and carbon dioxide (Carbon Cycle). The dramatic climatic effects of many such imbalances are being experienced world-wide and accelerating even beyond our understanding. We do not truly comprehend the piercing of the ozone layer which protects our earth and climate.

No less important is the threat to our fauna and the loss of certain species as well as the overfishing of our seas which has a similar effect.



Clearly the earth has undergone major climatic changes in the past with ice ages and heat but the effects of the changes in weather patterns which we are experiencing speak more of man-accelerated phenomena which are not only measurable but have a profound effect on the very resources we are trying to improve, for example an increase in the food supply.

On the one hand we 'modify crops artificially' to yield more, and some quibble, but counterbalance this with excess behaviour that has an effect on weather patterns that destroy the same crops. We try to enrich food and feed ourselves products that produce abnormalities in the food we eat and in us (Mad cow disease through feeding cattle meat.).



The imperative to feed all the peoples of the world which should be a priority often gives way to satisfying the need of those countries already surrounded by plenty - the poor countries are exploited by the insistence of growing the goods needed by the affluent. Single crop economies lead to crisis after crisis if the crop fails, with little consideration for the welfare of the producers of the same. Little regard is made for long term creative use of land in the countries with the greatest need of a variety of crops to feed their growing but often malnourished populace-

Imbalance after imbalance thus have a devastating effect on resources and distribution of the same.

This also applies to non-edible goods and national resources such as oil that become sources of enmity and power between nations and lead not only to exploitation by the rich of the poor but a bargaining tool and power play which in turn endangers peace on the planet.

For a Christian there are many dilemmas and it can become an overwhelming issue, with mind blowing complexities of theories, agreements and disagreements, of professional agendas based on power. But the bare truth remains that we are meant to be stewards and responsible in our use of the gifts that have been given to us. In our own way we can all play a part. We could all ask ourselves the following questions.....

Do I have more than I need and could some of it be used by someone else? Am I careful about reusing things and not merely buying out of laziness or social pressure?

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Do I care about the exploitation of poorer peoples and their poverty? Do I remain informed about the things that damage our earth and try to protect it?

Do I pray for those whose task it is to protect nature and govern wisely? Do I ask myself - if something 'new' is necessary or ethical, desirable, will it have consequences for others - is something proposed sustainable or is it a 'one off' wonder which is a 'quick fix' but not truly beneficial for all mankind?

Is something just and fair to many people? Is it shareable, with many being able to benefit from it.?

These are the issues that confront us to which we must answer honestly.

Finally, we must also be careful not to make of this issue an aim in itself. We can be guilty of making 'The Environment' into a kind of religion forgetting that it is God we worship and we must be stewards, caretakers and users of the gifts of the earth.

However, man has the primacy over nature as he is made in the image and likeness of God. To worship nature is an error, Pantheism, and the line has to be carefully drawn as Jesus said...

"Look how the wild- flowers grow: they don't work or make clothes for themselves. but I tell you that even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers. It is God who clothes the wild grass - grass that is here today and gone tomorrow burnt up in the oven. Won't He be all the more sure to clothe you? *Halina Holman ©*

**'Miracles are not contrary to nature only contrary to what we know about nature. '** *St Augustine.*

#### Feast Days in August

1<sup>st</sup> St. Alphonsus Mary Ligouri

2<sup>nd</sup> Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

4<sup>th</sup> St. John Vianney

6<sup>th</sup> The Transfiguration of the Lord

8<sup>th</sup> St. Dominic

9<sup>th</sup> Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

11<sup>th</sup> St. Clare of Assisi

12<sup>th</sup> St. Jane Frances de Chantal

14<sup>th</sup> St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe

16<sup>th</sup> Sunday: The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

20<sup>th</sup> St. Bernard

22<sup>nd</sup> The Queenship of Mary

23<sup>rd</sup> Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

24<sup>th</sup> St. Bartholomew, Apostle

26<sup>th</sup> St. Dominic Barberi

27<sup>th</sup> St. Monica      28<sup>th</sup> St. Augustine of Hippo

29<sup>th</sup> The Passion of St. John the Baptist

30<sup>th</sup> Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

31<sup>st</sup> St. Aidan & the Saints of Lindisfarne