

CRY OF THE EARTH CRY OF THE POOR Part 2

More Signs of the Times

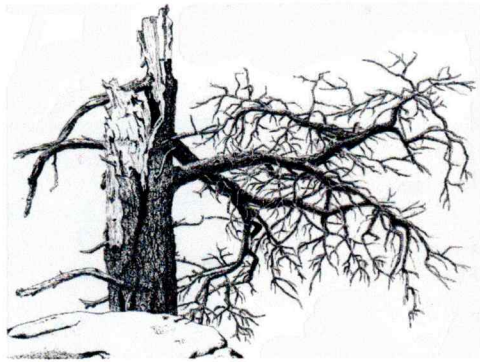
Listening to our Communities

Our interference with the balance of natural ecosystems has contributed to the outbreak and spread of animal diseases within the human population.

In Queensland the extensive destruction of east coast forests and unsustainable land clearing for new housing estates have

“resulted in bats.....coming into closer contact with horses. Infected horses appeared to have contracted the Hendra Virus from bat urine or faeces and were able to infect people.”

Assoc Prof K Barraclough (Doctors for Australia) and Exec Dir F Armstrong (Climate and Health Alliance)



For the First Nations People, the ecological crisis is particularly painful Vanessa Cavanagh's words reflect deep connection with country

“... for this grandmother tree, the combination of ongoing drought and persistent flames ended her reign at the far edge of the yard. The sight of this old tree with her crown removed brought warm, stinging tears to my eyes. It was a deep hurt of losing someone far older and wiser than me. Losing someone who was respected and adored. Someone with knowledge I cannot fathom or comprehend. When I told my mum that evening, she reacted similarly, a personal and family loss. To others she might just be a big tree.”

The Cry of the Young see their future being threatened. They want intergenerational justice
“I reckon (the community) should listen to us because at the end of the day it's our future, right? They're going to be going and it's going to be up to us to continue.” —(Year eleven student)

Listening to our Neighbours

Rising sea levels, bigger king tides, more frequent and severe storms, coastal erosion, coral bleaching, and decreasing fish stocks are already a daily reality for Pacific island nations. Some islands are in imminent danger of disappearing beneath the waves.

“As a mother of a seven-month-old baby I am worried about his future and his life - all the children of Tuvalu have a right to life - a right to an environment with good quality. I love my country, I love my people and traditions, I love my culture and I don't want to lose them because of climate change. We all want to stay in our own lands because it defines who we are. We don't want to migrate or relocate. Merineta from Tuvalu

Marlene Moses, former Nauruan Ambassador to the United Nations, points out:

“For the people of small islands, understanding the importance of the ocean to human survival is as natural as breathing. If the ocean is healthy, we are healthy; if the future of the ocean is uncertain, so is ours.”

Listening to Creation

Every creature speaks to us of the Creator, but human beings do not always listen.

The First Nations people remind us of the interconnectedness of people and the rest of creation:

“The land and environment is our Mother. Treat her with love and tenderness, nurture and never mistreat her, or take more than what is required.”Vicki Clark

It is estimated that nearly three billion native animals were in the path of the 2019-2020 bushfires!

The suffering of our rivers and waterways, our groundwater, reefs, and oceans, is plain to see. Successive bleaching events in the Great Barrier Reef send a loud message.



CRY OF THE EARTH CRY OF THE POOR Part 1

The Signs of the Times

The millennium drought, the 2019-2020 bushfire season, COVID 19 and the 2021 floods have raised questions for many Australians about our common home. As well the need to transition to a low carbon economy, we also know that the safety, health and livelihoods of those who are the poorest and most vulnerable are usually the most severely impacted.

Fires, floods, and droughts have become less predictable and more intense.

"Throughout my career in natural resource management, I have attended quite a few large fires, saved houses, and have even been stranded in front of a fire, but never had I felt such confusion as trying to resolve what seemed the sensible thing to do when my gut feeling was to stay and defend." (Neil Ward)



Families that have been farming for generations are rethinking operations whilst others are leaving the land.

The first thing that we've done much more successfully, in the past few years since the Millennium drought, is protect our soil resources by better management of livestock, using the water when it falls more efficiently and preserving it in pasture and in the landscape... I feel concerned about the future viability of farms. The way forward is not completely clear for everybody, is it?" Lucinda Corrigan –NSW farmer

The way in which we have built our cities has resulted in urban heat islands Dr Sebastian Pfautsch

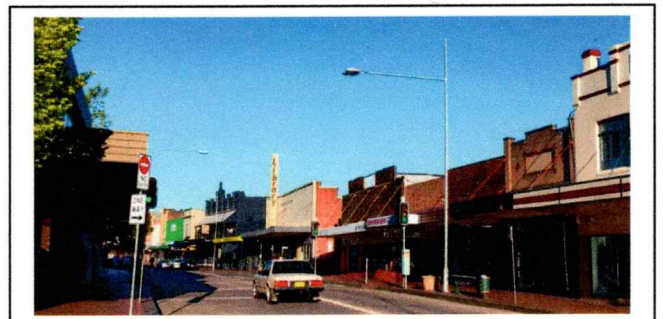
January 4th 2020, Penrith was the hottest place on Earth at 48.9°C (half-way to boiling point) and in 2019 Parramatta sweltered through 47 days with temperatures over 35°C."

Climate Council

The mining sector may only employ 2-3% of the Australian workforce, but it is a very important employer in some communities. These communities are anxious about the future, as a Lithgow resident explains:

"...the domino effect that the closure of this mine will have would be disastrous for the local community. Schools will be forced to lay off staff, shops will close, and people will move away... the town [is] hanging by a thread as it is."

Adapted from the 2021-22 Social Justice Statement
ACBC Cry of the Earth Cry of the Poor



Cry of the Earth Cry of the Poor Part 3

Drawing Wisdom from Our Own Wells

Our wisdom sources are like wells from which we draw life-giving and renewing water. We draw wisdom from Scripture, our theological tradition, Catholic Social Teaching, and human knowledge to water the seeds of change. We acknowledge the unique place of the wisdom of the First Nations peoples, who were caring for country before Abraham set out for the promised land, and who continue to do so today.

Listening to the Word of God in Scripture

Pope Francis points out, some previous readings of humans having 'dominion' over creatures (Gen 1:26-31) appear deficient in today's world where creation is now endangered by this form of mastery. (*Laudato Si* 2015 no67) Now we can better appreciate that we are creatures within creation, in relationship with the whole earth, plants, birds, beasts, fish, soil and garden. We are called to be caretakers (Gen 2:15) rather than exploiters.



*O LORD, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures
May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works (Ps 104: 24,31)*

Jesus refers to God's care for the birds of the air and the flowers of the ground as examples of the care that God holds for even the most passing of the things of nature. He shows us the tenderness and attentiveness of God's care which encourages us to care for the things of the earth as much as God does.....

"Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, at yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more value than they?" (Mt 6:26)

This passage shows that the Scriptures often focus on the relationship of the divine to humanity, with nature given a secondary place. It is assuring to know how much more God cares for us than for ephemeral plants, but we can fail to notice the arrogance we sometimes show towards the things of the natural world.

These ancient texts were not composed in the context of the environmental degradation we have created today, nor the poverty inflicted upon so many of our sisters and brothers.



Land degradation

However, the Scriptures do equip us with the power of lament. The lament psalms and the harrowing texts of the Book of Lamentation give us the courage to stand before God in prayer, sorrow, remorse, and contrition as we face up to the extinction of creatures, the loss of habitat and the difficulty of truly caring for the earth. Biblical lament does not leave us powerless; it is a necessary step towards conversion and new life.

Some Theological Foundations

The three-person God is a Trinity of love. Every creative act and every part of creation emerges from this divine interplay of love. The entire creation is upheld and sustained in the continuous love of God its creator, energizer, governor, sustainer, and completion.

This love extends from the existence of the smallest particle of star dust, through to the mysterious laws that govern the universe, to the creation of humans with free will and radical choice. The 'mystery of God's will', the 'good pleasure of God' (Eph 1:9) is one of absolute love.



Cry of the Earth Cry of the Poor Part 4

Drawing Wisdom from Our Own Wells

Some More Theological Foundations

All material things are created in love and are loved in their nature as matter. All creation goes through cycles of change across time, and nothing escapes entropy or death or reenergizing or re-emergence. This is the cycle of matter and its transformations.

The more we recognise this divine presence (in creation) the more we uncover the sacramentality of creation.

The universe is infused with the love of God, and we are immersed in a world that continues to reveal the presence of the divine Word. The psalms rejoice in the divine artisan: "I look upon the heavens, made by your fingers, at the moon and the stars you set in place (Ps 8: 3)".

The saints appreciate it in song and prayer. St Francis sings, "Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs."



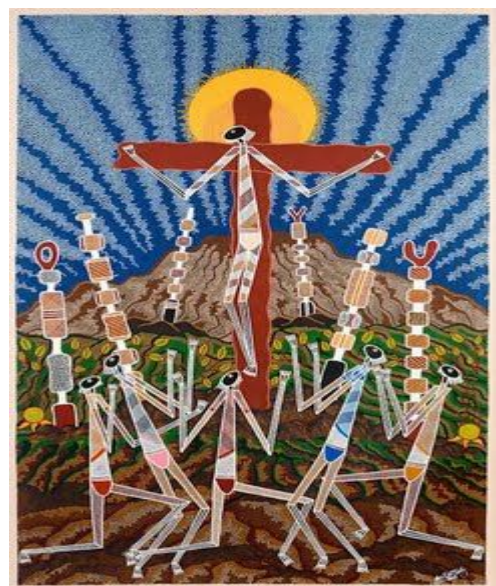
The liturgy takes up this underlying sacramentality in all things as it uses water, wheat, grape, oil, music, smell, and touch to transform us into a new creation.



Within the realm of created things, we humans carry a sacramental trace of Christ. Jesus teaches that to care for one of the least is to care for him (Mt 25:40).

"We like the way [Jesus] uses the things of nature to teach, and the important part nature plays in the Sacraments ... We can appreciate also the community nature of the Church, because we are very conscious of being part of a group bound by Religious ties. We are strong on ceremony through dance and song and painted bodies. Our ceremony closely involves groups and group participation... So the ceremony of the Mass, the ceremony of the Sacraments and the ceremony of the liturgy should find a ready response in us, provided it is made meaningful, based on a theology that is tuned to the Aboriginal mind."

Deacon Boniface Perdjert



Artist : Greg Weatherby

....we are invited into ongoing conversion to transform our outlook and actions to be in accord with the loving presence of God at the heart of all reality, to be attentive to the beauty in all things, to recognise Christ in the stranger, and to hear and respond to the cry of the earth.

Cry of the Earth Cry of the Poor Part 5

Drawing Wisdom from Our Own Wells

Wisdom from Catholic Social Teaching

Promoting a relationship of care and kinship with the rest of creation is not a new thing in our social justice tradition. We need only recall St Francis' Canticum of the Creatures.



**"Praised be you, my Lord,
through our Sister, Mother Earth,
who sustains us and directs us
bringing forth all kinds of fruits
and coloured flowers and herbs"**

Pope John XXIII recognised that it had reached potentially catastrophic proportions with the development of nuclear weapons capable of destroying the planet.

During the 1980s Bishops Conferences around the world, especially in Asia and Africa, began to speak out about the environmental impact of dominant models of development. Throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, Pope John Paul II spoke increasingly often about our **stewardship of creation**. He frequently affirmed the harmonious relationships of indigenous peoples with creation on his many travels. (JP11 Address to Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander peoples 1986)



Pope Benedict XVI lamented the exploitation and hoarding of non-renewable energy sources by rich nations and stressed the need for international solidarity and coordination. (*caritas in Veritate* 2009)

Now, Pope Francis is helping us to understand stewardship in a less human-centred and more mutual way. We are in **communion with our fellow creatures** who also sustain and care for us. He has shifted the language to care for our common home. Pope Francis is calling us to a relationship based less on duty and more on love.



The Peaceable Kingdom E Hicks

A commitment to the common good leads us to take action to ensure conditions in which everyone, including future generations, can meet their needs and reach their potential. Every person, and every creature, is loved by God who made us and wants the good of all of us. (*Francis Laudato Si* 2015)



(Peterborough Victoria Northumberland & Clarrington Cath District)

The call to ecological conversion is a major theme in Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* along with the need for an integral approach to economic, social and ecological issues

"... we have to realise that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor." (Laudato Si 2015)