



The Environment JUSTICE Briefing No 2 April 09

“The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it.” Psalm

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE RE-USEABLE BAG !!

At the check-out in the local Super Value Shop the heavy duty reusable bags available are ambiguously advertised as “A bag for Life” indicating the obvious longevity of service they will provide and also the deeper meaning of the contribution to maintaining the environment that choosing the reusable option will bring. Here in this simple slogan are two elements, one referring to the practical life task of shopping and the other to the possibility of making a choice that shows an attitude or spirit attuned to caring for the world we live in.

Someone once defined spirituality is nothing more than faith lived. Part of our faith journey must be living in harmony with the world in which we live. Realizing God's Kingdom our Christian Mission is therefore linked to the environment in which we live for we cannot love our neighbour unless we love and care for the world in which both we and our neighbour live. ***Our attitude to the environment is then, just as much part of our faith lived, by definition of our spirituality, as is our relationship to neighbour.*** This spirituality has been called many things – here, just to get the readers attention, “the spirituality of the reusable bag” but elsewhere “Eco-spirituality” or “Creation Spirituality.”

Whatever it is called it points to a new awareness of an interconnection and interdependence between us and the world. A connection that is not just physical but which also has a spiritual and faith dimension. Care for the environment is part of our Christian witness, of what we are called on to preach and teach as Missionaries. The Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh wrote - ***“God is in the bits and pieces of every day, a kiss here a laugh again and sometimes tears.”*** Perhaps this is something we should take more notice of in these times when we are more conscious of the need to conserve reuse and recycle. The bits and pieces of our lives matter. The stewardship of caring for creation is also a place to find God as are prayer, scripture, the sacraments and ministry to the faithful.

The reusable bag and the turned off switch connect us in a positive way to those who live far away, to those who will come after us and to the God who made us.



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF ECOLOGY

The Church steers a middle course between seeing nature in absolute terms or reducing it to a mere instrument. Nature has been placed in the hands of mankind, but should be used responsibly and prudently. Below is a summary of the main points of the Church's teaching on ecological matters based on the Social Doctrine Compendium of the Church.

1. The Bible lays out the fundamental moral principles. The human person, made in God's image, is superior to all other earthly creatures. Creation should be used responsibly. Christ's incarnation and his teachings testify to the value of nature: Nothing that exists in this world is outside the divine plan of creation and redemption.

2. The social teaching of the Church recalls two fundamental points. We should not reduce nature to a mere instrument to be manipulated and exploited. Nor should we make nature an absolute value, or put it above the dignity of the human person.

3. The question of the environment entails the whole planet, as it is a collective good. Our responsibility toward ecology extends to future generations.

4. It is necessary to confirm both the primacy of ethics and the rights of man over technology, thus preserving human dignity. The central point of reference for all scientific and technical applications must be respect for the human person, who in turn should treat the other created beings with respect.

5. Nature must not be regarded as a reality that is divine in itself; therefore, it is not removed from human action. It is, rather, a gift offered by our Creator to the human community, confided to human intelligence and moral responsibility. It follows, then, that it is not illicit to modify the ecosystem, so long as this is done within the context of a respect for its order and beauty, and taking into consideration the utility of every creature.

6. Ecological questions highlight the need to achieve a greater harmony both between measures designed to foment economic development and those directed to preserving the ecology, and between national and international policies. Economic development, moreover, needs to take into consideration the integrity and rhythm of nature, because natural resources are limited. And all economic activity that uses natural resources should also include the costs of safeguarding the environment into the calculations of the overall costs of its activity.

7. Concern for the environment means that we should actively work for the integral development of the poorest regions. The goods of this world have been created by God to be wisely used by all. These goods should be shared, in a just and charitable manner. The principle of the universal destiny of goods offers a fundamental orientation to deal with the complex relationship between ecology and poverty.

8. Collaboration, by means of worldwide agreements, backed up by international law, is necessary to protect the environment. Responsibility toward the environment needs to be implemented in an adequate way at the juridical level. These laws and agreements should be guided by the demands of the common good.

9. Lifestyles should be oriented according to the principles of sobriety, temperance and self-discipline, both at the personal and social levels. People need to escape from the consumer mentality and promote methods of production that respect the created order, as well as satisfying the basic needs of all. This change of lifestyle would be helped by a greater awareness of the interdependence between all the inhabitants of the earth.

10. A spiritual response must be given to environmental questions, inspired by the conviction that creation is a gift that God has placed in the hands of mankind, to be used responsibly and with loving care. People's fundamental orientation toward the created world should be one of gratitude and thankfulness. The world, in fact, leads people back to the mystery of God who has created it and continues to sustain it. If God is forgotten, nature is emptied of its deepest meaning and left impoverished.



Fr. Oliver Noonan SMA

Works in the Turkana area of Kenya where droughts appear to be becoming longer and more frequent.

Kenya has become a full 3.5 degrees Celsius hotter in the past 20 years due to climate change.

Both photographs here were taken by Oliver and clearly show the difference that irrigation and good management of water resources can make.



**“Use of the earth’s resources is not absolute:
it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his/her neighbour, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation.”**

Catechism of the Catholic Church