



ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK

JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION COMMISSION

2011 SPRING ASSEMBLY

The Integrity of Creation—Fr Sean McDonagh Launch of the Live Simply Parish Award Scheme—Kevin McCullough from CAFOD

The Southwark JPIC 2011 Spring Assembly was held in the New Barn, Aylesford Priory on Saturday 21st May. Fr. Michael Scanlon, Chair of the Commission, welcomed members of Justice & Peace groups and organisations involved in the day from across the diocese. We were also delighted to have Bishop Pat Lynch join us for part of the day until he had to leave for another engagement.



The meeting started with a lively table discussion which resulted in some interesting feedback, facilitated by Phil Kerton.

Picking up early on the theme of the day some of the groups reported back concerns about climate change and the loss of bio-diversity. The Church needs to be more involved!

The need to support Fairtrade initiatives was a common theme. One group expressed concerns about Fairtrade for UK farmers in the face of aggressive supermarket purchasing and also about exploitation of workers in the vast poly tunnel complexes on Thanet.

Another group had guests from Calcutta and they reported on their discussions on pollution UK v India and the support and education needed to get the message across, here again there was a call for the Church to take a role.

The plight of seafarers was the primary topic at one table and also the exploitation of Africa, especially by China, and greater need for more effectively targeted IMF Funding.

The need to work with people of other faiths was another topic raised. This could be particularly relevant in campaigns for better support for asylum seekers. Concern was also expressed about the dispersal of immigrants to Scotland as well as Hastings and Thanet in the South East.

Other areas mentioned included homelessness issues, concerns over youth gangs (particularly with the withdrawal of support from Government cut backs), Pollution in the UK from people driving too quickly as well as from airport expansion proposals. The point was made that electric cars do need fuel as well, they are not zero carbon.

One table mentioned the shortages in the NHS due to a lack of trained staff and another concentrated on how members of religious orders could best be active and maximise their resources in J&P issues.



All in all there was an encouraging level of interest and involvement in the issues affecting our society and our planet today.

(thanks to Ian Smith for all photos)

***livesimply* Parish Award Scheme**

A new initiative to enable us to take our environmental concerns to the wider church community is the Live Simply Parish Award Scheme.

The national launch had been held a few days earlier in the Clifton diocese and we were delighted to welcome Kevin McCullough, Head of the CAFOD Campaigns, to launch the scheme in Southwark.



***livesimply* so others can simply live!** The award scheme is asking parish and religious communities to define their connections with the billion people on our planet surviving on under \$2 per day. It would require the resources of 3 planets for the whole to world live our lifestyle and the scheme is aimed at raising awareness of our impact on the lives of those in developing countries and on the lives of future generations.

The Bishops' Conference document "The Call to Creation" tells us that "Individual actions may seem insignificant but together the small steps of many people can have an astonishing impact"

The *livesimply* award scheme is supported by 80 Catholic organisations and co-ordinated by the Eco-congregations organisation. It recognises parish and community achievements in living more sustainably with creation and living in solidarity with people living in poverty.

How to get started?

If you are in a parish first get the support of your parish priest, then set up a *livesimply* group and carry out an assessment to identify where to start. The information and resources pack, available from the JPIC office or direct from CAFOD, gives full information and assistance. The next step is to formulate a plan of action identifying three significant actions and six supporting ones.

The self assessment and plan to move forward should involve discussion covering, amongst other areas, reflection and worship, practical actions and actions to reach out to your wider community.

One question to ask could be if, when spending money, your parish considers the environmental and social effects of its choices? Eg. Fairtrade food or sustainable products for buildings work or office cleaning supplies. Another could be to consider if your parish engages with the local council, MP or other decision makers or with the media to influence public debate on issues of environmental and social justice?

Kevin offered us several inspirational ideas. Prodiplan in Bangladesh is one of CAFOD's partners. In *Bengali* the name means enlightenment. Their aim is to create a society where the basic needs of the people can be ensured through socio-economic development initiatives.

The initial effort of Prodiplan was to mobilize the people in south-west part of Bangladesh who were facing long-term effects of water-logging. The focus was gradually expanded to deal with the environmental problems of coastal region. Prodiplan gives special emphasis on human development and stresses on raising social awareness and empowerment of the beneficiaries.

Closer to home we were shown pictures of two schools one has fitted solar panels to their roof, the other has won an eco-schools award for recycling, reducing waste and establishing an eco garden.

Kevin distributed a sheet of 100 *livesimply* ideas and asked us to consider which 5 of these our parish already does and which 3 significant actions under each heading we think our parishes might undertake.

So why take on the *livesimply* award?

The award will give recognition to the work your parish is already doing and inspire other parishioners to become more involved. It will enable you to share good ideas with others. It will enable us to play our part in the ecumenical Eco-congregations initiative (sadly taken up by very few Catholic parishes) and, perhaps most importantly, by working collectively we can achieve more impact and raise awareness outside our immediate community.

Be inspired by:



- Yourself and the ongoing work in your parish and community to :
- *livesimply*
- Live sustainably
- Live in solidarity

CAFOD
JUSTICE WORLD

OK - but what help will we get?

The full *livesimply* pack contains ideas for worship and reflection, for reaching out, for practical action and actions for individuals as well as general information and registration details. The *livesimply* web site also provides assistance: www.livesimplyaward.org.uk and David Hughes at Eco congregations is happy to provide support e-mail coordintor@livesimplyaward.co.uk or telephone 0114 263 6421

The Integrity of Creation

The Holy Father's words "If you want to cultivate peace protect creation" were quoted on the opening slide of an inspiring presentation given by eco-theologian Fr Sean McDonagh.



Whenever nature, and human beings in particular, are seen merely as products of chance or an evolutionary determinism, our overall sense of responsibility wanes. On the other hand, **seeing creation as God's gift to humanity helps us understand our vocation and worth as human beings.**

Fr Sean reminded us of the words of Pope John Paul II: *"In our day there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened ... also by a lack of due respect for nature" and in an early reminder of the value of the livesimply scheme "Ecological awareness...needs to be helped to develop and mature, and find fitting expression in concrete programmes and initiatives"*

He also quoted from Pope Paul VI encyclical Octogesima Adveniens *"By an ill-considered exploitation of nature (man) risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation...not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace – pollution and refuse, new illnesses and absolute destructive capacity – but the human framework is no longer under man's control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable. This is a wide-ranging social problem which concerns the entire human family"*.

So how can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as

- climate change,
- desertification,
- the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas,
- the pollution of rivers and aquifers,
- the loss of biodiversity,
- the increase of natural catastrophes
- and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions?

Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of "environmental refugees", people who are forced by the degradation of their natural habitat to forsake it – and often their possessions as well – in order to face the dangers and uncertainties of forced displacement?

Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources? All these are issues with a profound impact on the exercise of human rights, such as the right to life, food, health and development.

The ecological health of the planet calls for a profound, long-term review of our model of development. Our present crises – be they economic, food-related, environmental or social – are ultimately also moral crises, and all are interrelated. They call for a lifestyle marked by sobriety and solidarity, with new rules and forms of engagement, one which focuses confidently and courageously on strategies that actually work, decisively rejecting those that have failed.

The Catholic Catechism (295) tells us that the world *"is not the product of any necessity whatsoever, nor of blind fate or chance... The world proceeds from the free will of God; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, in his intelligence, and in his goodness"*.

Sad to say, it is all too evident that large numbers of people in different countries and areas of our planet are experiencing increased hardship because of the negligence or refusal of many others to exercise responsible stewardship over the environment. Environmental degradation is often due to the lack of far-sighted official policies or to the pursuit of myopic economic interests, which then, tragically, become a serious threat to creation.

Fr Sean reminded us of the words of Caritas in Veritate (37) *"every economic decision has a moral consequence"*.

When making use of natural resources, we should be concerned for their protection and consider the cost entailed – environmentally & socially – as an essential part of the overall expenses incurred. A greater sense of intergenerational solidarity is urgently needed. Future generations cannot be saddled with the cost of our use of common environmental resources.

And again from Caritas in Veritate (37) *"We have inherited from past generations, and we have benefited from the work of our contemporaries; for this reason we have obligations towards all, and we cannot refuse to interest ourselves in those who will come after us...This is a responsibility that present generations have towards those of the future, a responsibility that concerns individual States and international community"*.

Among the basic problems which the international community has to address is that of energy resources and the development of joint and sustainable strategies to satisfy the energy needs of the present and future generations.....

This means that technologically advanced societies must be prepared to encourage more sober lifestyles, while reducing their energy consumption and improving its efficiency. At the same time there is a need to encourage research into, and utilization of, forms of energy with lower impact on the environment.

Fr Sean advocated the adoption of a model of development based on

- the centrality of the human person,
- promotion and sharing of the common good,
- responsibility,
- realization of our need for a changed life-style
- and quoting Thomas Aquinas “prudence, the virtue which tells us what needs to be done today in view of what might happen tomorrow”.

Attention also needs to be paid to the world-wide problem of water, which is of prime importance for life on earth. Suitable strategies for rural development centered on small farmers and their families should be explored, as well as the implementation of appropriate policies for the management of forests, for waste disposal and for strengthening the linkage between combating climate change and overcoming poverty.



One can only encourage the efforts of the international community to ensure progressive disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons, whose presence alone threatens the life of the planet and the ongoing integral development of the present and future generations.

If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation.

The quest for peace by people of good will surely become easier if all acknowledge the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the whole of creation.

Protecting the natural environment in order to build a world of peace is thus a duty incumbent upon each and all. It is an urgent challenge, one to be faced with renewed and concerted commitment; it is also a providential opportunity to hand down to coming generations the prospect of a better future for all. *“The protection of creation and peacemaking are profoundly linked! For this reason, I invite all believers to raise a fervent prayer to God, the all-powerful Creator and the Father of mercies, so that all men and women may take to heart the urgent appeal: If you want to cultivate peace protect creation”* Pope Benedict XVI (World Peace Day 2010).

Questions and answers:

For the final session of the day Fr Sean was joined by Salesian Father Martin Poulson and Jim Simmons, CAFOD’s Diocesan Manager.

From the lively debate which followed, enough to fill a further 4 pages - the following points stood out for me:

On the question of working with and encouraging youth, concern was expressed at the difficulty in getting young people engaged with nature in our increasingly high-tech society. Fr Martin mentioned the encouraging involvement of youth in the Clifton *livesimply* launch and Jim stressed the value of getting CAFOD volunteers into all our Catholic schools to spread the message.

In reply to a question regarding getting parishes to use Fair-traded goods the general feeling was that we need to be more upfront in asking the question. Jim mentioned one parish which is growing ecologically grown vegetables and selling them in the parish to raise funds.

On the question of the Tobin tax (aka Robin Hood Tax), this may need international agreement to stop speculators just moving off shore but it was agreed that it was extraordinary that speculation is one of very few untaxed areas

On a question regarding food sustainability Fr Sean told us that in 1800 the average person in the UK was spending 80% of their income on food. By 2010 that had reduced to 10% but the tide may be about to turn. Petrochemicals produce food cheaply but at the cost of long term degradation to the land and the water supply. The future should be one of mixed agriculture with good technology and breeding not one of genetically modified mono-culture. A move towards sensible vegetarianism would also benefit us and the earth.

If you want to cultivate PEACE

PROTECT CREATION



POPE BENEDICT XVI
WORLD DAY OF PEACE 2010

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