

# Christian Vegetarian Association UK

Working towards a violence-free world

Home of Veg4Lent



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## WHAT THE CHRISTIAN PAPERS SAY

September 2008

### Contributors

A big thank you to the following CVAUK Members:

**John Gilheany, Margaret Turner, Carol Jacklin, Fr Derek Reeve**

All members

Please cut and send any items of interest from any publication, to Don Gwillim for consideration.

**To even our workload please send any press cuttings monthly.**

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Vegetarianism Honours God's Creation

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## How's That?

**Christian Vegetarians/vegans can become very discouraged by the indifference of their church towards the suffering of God's other creatures.**

**Please do not be down hearted.**

**Every person who reduces the meat in their diet or becomes vegetarian/vegan saves**

**Thousands of animals**

**from a terribly cruel and violent, life and death.**

*According to VIVA the average Brit eats 11,047 animals in their lifetime:*

*1 Goose, 1158 Chickens, 4 Cattle, 6182 fish, 23 Sheep, 18 Pigs,*

*39 Turkeys, 28 Ducks, 1 Rabbit and 3593 Shellfish.*

### Why concern for the environment is so important to CVAUK's campaigns

As you read this press compilation you will notice that 75% of articles/letters are concerning the environment. CVAUK believe that to have any chance of introducing vegetarianism into the church, we need to show that it is a Christian's responsibility to look after God's creation. We can then introduce a vegetarian/vegan diet as a logical response to that care.

We must also point out that meat eaters may become unhealthy because they have not evolved into carnivores and a change to God's perfect diet (*Genesis 1 v 29-31*) will be good for their health. God would not give us an unhealthy diet.

We should encourage discussions in church/house groups on sustainability and highlight scriptures that confirm;

- (a) God's goodness and mercy embraces all of God's creation,
- (b) that by being made in God's image, we have a responsibility to become good stewards, caring for God's creation as God cares for us,
- (c) that the Gospel is good news for the whole of God's creation, not just humankind.

We should use every opportunity to pray for environmental justice for the poor and the rest of God's creation and submit articles to church newsletters/magazines. Once established you can argue that vegetarianism is a logical Christian response to humankind's destruction of god's creation. 'What the Christian Papers Say' is a fantastic resource which can be used to compose your prayers and support statements in your letters/articles to Christian newspapers and church magazines.

'Must read' articles are highlighted: **\*Climate change .... their homes\***

**Bold highlighted text:** by Don.

### Unpublished letters

**Many of us spend hours researching and writing unpublished letters to the Christian press. Do not let your efforts go to waste they could help and inspire other CVAUK members.**

**Please send to CVAUK any unpublished letters, together with a copy of the letter / article that initiated your letter for possible inclusion in future CVAUK press compilations or Newsletter.**

### When writing letters to the press criticise constructively

There are times when we have to speak out. Issues of injustice and pain and suffering pull on the chords of our heart and we feel we must do something. So we should - righteousness and justice are from the same stable.

However, when we do feel the need to criticise - whether that be our politicians, our society or our church - we should do so with the conviction that we want to see people grow and develop. We should learn to speak the truth in love. It's better to say nothing, than to say something because of hate or prejudice.

#### Get involved

We cannot criticise our world, our society or our leaders if we are not willing to be part of the solution. Everyone of us is able to be a protester! We know what we do not like. If we feel passionate about politicians losing trust, then maybe we should become an example of a trustworthy politician? If we think our community is losing its identity and its strength, maybe we should help it to find it again.

Of course we need also to pray - to rely on God and his grace working through us. The more we connect with him, the more we will reflect him to the world around us. Here's a challenge we may not like - perhaps we have ended up with the society, government and leaders we deserve? Maybe, just maybe, there is a better, brighter and fairer society round the corner. Maybe it is hidden in the hearts of our neighbours and our friends. Maybe God is challenging us to move from our comfort zones to the place where he always wanted us to be - shaping and changing our world by being in it, but not of it. That would make us read the news differently, wouldn't it?

**Rev. Malcolm Duncan**

*Extract from 'Looking for a leader' Christian Herald 21st May 2005.*

## The Tablet

9th February 2008

**\* Repent and renew \***

*In a powerful message this week given to MPs as they prepare urgent measures to combat climate change, Lenten observance is promoted as a time to see the world and our lives anew*

It was at an Ash Wednesday Mass in 1967 when I was a seven-year-old altar boy that I first remember hearing the words: "Remember, man, that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return." Facing up to mortality" is a big demand for one of so few years and I remember hearing these words repeatedly as I followed the priest along the rows of expectant faces. I did not like the message one bit and was more than a little relieved several years on when they were replaced on most Ash Wednesdays with the now more familiar: "Repent and believe the Gospel." Until now, I've always thought of these two sets of words as unrelated but I no longer feel that this is the case.

Repentance conjures up images of sackcloth and ashes and saying "sorry". It is much more profound than that. Its etymology suggests a radical re-orientating of our hearts and minds so that we see the world anew. If we begin to see the world differently, we will begin to act in relation to it differently. True repentance involves realising, once more, that we are, like the rest of creation, connected as if in a web. In scientific terms, this means that we are a small, if at present rather damaging, part of a complex ecosystem.

Biologists predict that at least 20 per cent of all present species of plants and animals are, in their words, "committed to extinction" by 2050 because of the changing atmospheric temperatures, with little sign of new organisms evolving to take their place. Changes to food chains and the like will ultimately have their rebound effects on us too. How has this come about in what seems so swift a period of time?

The humility required to know our place and observe our limits was a central part of the tradition of early monasticism. This is not some woolly-minded environmentalism that worships nature as goddess. It is an integral part of our tradition - a tradition that recognises that as physical creatures we possess an intimate solidarity with the Earth and our fate is tied to it. When God breathes life into creation, it is the Hebrew word *mach*, the "breath of God", which binds all created matter. Nature is not God: that would be idolatry but, as Augustine reminds us, the reality of God is mirrored in but not identical with creation.

So when did it all start to go wrong? Well before the Industrial Revolution, many of our leading thinkers in the West began to speak in disturbing language that described nature as an externality. They began to view our relationship with the natural world in purely instrumental terms, more "I-It" than "I-Thou". Descartes talked of us becoming "lords and possessors of nature"; Francis Bacon and a flock of scientific rationalists in the seventeenth century did the same. In the dominant utilitarian thinking of the time, nature could be manipulated from without.

This mind set continued to hold sway once the fossil-fuel bonanza got under way first in Britain then elsewhere. In the twentieth century, forests could be cut down for huge profit, oceans acidified and, at the back of the collective mind, there was always a consoling thought that whatever was happening "out there" was happening to "it" and not to us. As one Hindu guru put it: "When we cut down the trees, we don't realise that we are sitting on the branches."

A minor villain in this disturbing play was a brand of fundamentalism that sought to justify human behaviour in the name of "dominion": a word that occurs in the first chapter of Genesis. There's a strong case for arguing that this word never meant "mastery" but had greater overtones of "nurturing" or "tending to creation", as a tenant would his master's land. How might genuine repentance and a refocusing on our status as "creatures of dust" help us to get back to this interpretation:

Cafod's "Live Simply" campaign is a good place to start. Lifestyles that promote less frenetic activity with renewed emphasis on locality and community stand a much better chance of securing the inner fulfillment that 30 years of material economic growth has not delivered for us. In the West we face an obesity epidemic while at the same time we throw away a third of the food we produce. The trends point to a species that is radically "out of sync" with itself, with nature and with God.

In the months ahead, MPs are expected to agree on measures to combat climate change. The United Kingdom is rightly proud to be the only country that has so far committed itself to a legal framework that will bind all future governments. The measures we adopt will do much to influence those crucial talks leading to Copenhagen 2009 and the Kyoto Treaty's successor.

The latest science suggests that a stated target of 60 per cent cuts in CO2 emissions by 2050 is woefully weak. The talk now is of making this 80 per cent. At Operation Noah, after discussions with bodies such as the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research and others, we are calling for a 90 per cent cut by 2030. Such a target is realistic in the light of the recent statement from the former UK Government Chief Scientist, Sir David King, that global warming constitutes a much bigger threat to our society than terrorism. If every country in the G8 pledged a minimum of 10 per cent of its annual military budget to the transformation of its energy economy it would go a long way towards helping to ward off this huge threat to our future security.

In 1987, in his encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Pope John Paul II wrote about solidarity as "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good: that is, the good of all and each individual because we are all really responsible for all".

Our individual and collective polluting of the planet is absorbed into the biosphere in a way that makes us all responsible. That the poorest of the world who pollute the least are the most vulnerable to the threats of floods, famine and rising sea levels makes this an issue of justice and peace, and the development agencies such as Cafod are right to have made this a central plank of their work. We need to repent and see the world and our lives anew, to observe our small place in nature and to act, once more, in ways that respect limits.

*Mark Dowd* is campaign strategist for the Christian environmental organisation, *Operation Noah*. This article is taken from an address he delivered to MPs and peers at Westminster on Ash Wednesday at an event organised by the Catholic aid agency, *Cafod*. #

10th May 2008

\* Preaching to fishes \*

*Holy dogs and Asses: animals in Christian tradition*

By Laura Hobgood -Oster

Do you know the story of St Colman and the fly? Colman had founded a monastery at Kilmacduagh in the first decades of the seventh century and there he lived as a monk and bishop. While he was reading a book, a fly would walk up and down the page. When he had to go to attend to some business, he would instruct the fly to sit down on the line where he had stopped, to mark the place - which the fly would do. Or do you know the story of Cuthbert and the otters? Bede describes how one of the brothers in the monastery at Coldingham noticed that Cuthbert slipped out of the monastery during the night, returning in time for the Divine Office, and decided one night to follow him. He saw Cuthbert go to the beach and then wade out to his neck in the freezing waters of the North Sea, where he prayed. Returning to the beach, Cuthbert knelt again to pray and two otters followed him from the sea and dried him with their breath and their fur.

These are two of the many tales from the early Christian centuries of saints befriending and being befriended by wild animals. When we read in the *Little Flowers* of St Francis how he tamed the wolf at Gubbio, or rescued the doves in the market and built them nests, or how St Anthony preached to the fishes, we can see that these stories are in a long tradition already nearly 1,000 years old. The common theme is that the person who has tamed the wildness within their own heart can find peace with the wild animals around them. They restore the original peace of God's creation when the animals ate vegetation, not each other - a restoration prophesied in Isaiah, that the lion should eat straw like the ox, that the suckling child should play on the hole of the asp, the wolf dwell with the lamb and the leopard lie down with the kid. There is a beautiful collection of these stories by Helen Waddell, *Beasts and Saints* (1934), clearly aimed at children despite the formidably learned introduction. But these are more than tales to entrance and inspire the young. They raise profound questions about the doctrine of Creation and of the Fall, and about the scope and goal of salvation. **No one could imagine a Christian willingly inflicting avoidable pain on an animal - cruelty is inconsistent with Christian love - but is that enough? What should be the relationship of a Christian to non-human animals?**

Professor Hobgood-Oster's book leads us to face these questions. Having laid out some quick snapshots of the way animals were treated and understood in the early Church and the Middle Ages, she suggests that this sympathetic view gave way after the Middle Ages (she lays surprising stress on Descartes as the culprit) so that Christianity could see no further than its preoccupation with the human. On the way, she stops to look at the unique relationship human beings have had with dogs in the Christian tradition (she dedicates the book to 13 named and "many more" dogs in her life) and the ceremonies of animal blessing held annually in the Anglican cathedrals in New York and Washington DC. Much of this is thought-provoking and raises many more questions than it can satisfactorily answer: its range is too wide, its coverage is too superficial and its tone is too confident.

The final chapter offers a review of recent literature which has attempted to provide a new Christian view of animals. She takes them on a scale from conservative to radical. Matthew Scully's *Dominion* starts with the recognition that human beings do have power over animals and urges a thorough going human-centred understanding of the status of animals. Andrew Linzey's *Animal Theology* argues, by contrast, that animals have rights because God can be wronged in his Creation, and calls for a liberation theology for animals, warning against a "humanocentric" view of the world which Christian theologians commonly deduce from the Incarnation; he wants humanity to repent of its hubris in thinking that the Creation exists for us.

More radically, Jay McDaniel's *Of God and Pelicans* is concerned with innocent suffering and argues that a picture of God who is only engaged with human suffering is too small; this "relational panentheism" sees the cosmic Christ as present in the whole universe, in both human and non-human life, suffering along with the animals. **Sallie McFague's "The Body of God" wants the reader to see the whole universe as the Body of Christ, not just the Church or humanity, and seeks to dethrone humans as the rulers, judges and protectors of everything else; humanity should see itself as simply one species among millions.** This is not a particularly good book but it is certainly thought provoking. Perhaps we are in the early stages of a debate that could revolutionise how Christianity understands the world. **Bernard Green** #

28th June 2008

**\* Food into fuel tanks \***

by Alex Kirby

The United States has invested heavily in biofuels but there is growing evidence that the trend is playing a significant role in the world food crisis. Land turned over to ethanol production comes at the cost of many impoverished people going hungry. It sometimes seems a malign fate has decreed that almost every solution to an environmental problem brings a fresh problem trailing in its wake. There were the chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs, gases which when they were developed 50 years ago seemed ideal for many industrial uses. It was not until the 1980s that scientists found they were destroying the earth's protective ozone layer and warming the atmosphere. Then there was the development of biodegradable plastic bags, abandoned only when they proved to release methane, and other powerful greenhouse gases, as they decayed.

At first glance, biofuels tick all the right boxes. At least in theory, they reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. Although they release carbon dioxide, the most abundant greenhouse gas from human activities, when they are burnt, they absorb the same amount of gas produced while they are growing. So they should be carbon-neutral, unlike fossil fuels. They are homegrown, and can therefore reduce dependence on imported oil. And demand for them can breathe new life into rural communities.

But farming and processing the crops itself needs energy, which reduces biofuels' margin of superiority over oil. Land clearance to make room to grow them can also worsen global warming: there are economic incentives to plough peat lands and fell forests to grow bio-fuels, releasing huge amount of greenhouse gases in the process. Most biofuels today - anything made from organic sources like plants and animals and their byproducts - is ethanol or diesel. Suitable crops include cereals, soybean, rapeseed, sugar cane and oil palms. The best performing biofuels, like Brazil's ethanol, made from sugar cane, can deliver 10 times more energy than is needed to produce them, and release only a quarter of the greenhouse-gas emissions of their fossil fuel equivalents. Others are nowhere near as effective.

None of this has tempered the world's love affair with biofuel. The US President George W. Bush insists that by 2025 it should replace three-quarters of US oil imports. The EU target is for biofuel to supply 10 per cent of transport fuel by 2020. The global appetite is growing. World ethanol production doubled between 2000 and 2005, with biodiesel output quadrupling. And there's the rub. Growing crops to fill the tanks of cars means there is less to fill stomachs. Drought, rising oil prices, and growing consumer demand for more meat and dairy products in developing countries are already pushing food beyond the reach of millions of people. In less than a year, the price of wheat has risen 130 per cent, soya by 87 per cent and rice by 74 per cent. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation says that grain supplies are at their lowest since the 1980s. Overall global food prices have risen by 83 per cent since 2005.

In Ethiopia 75,000 children are suffering from acute malnutrition and illness, 4.6 million people need emergency food aid - and the global food crisis and increased fuel prices have forced a sharp rise in the price of imported food. Jeffrey McNeely is chief scientist of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). In September 2006 he wrote: **"The grain required to fill the petrol tank of a Range Rover with ethanol is sufficient to feed one person per year. Assuming the petrol tank is refilled every two weeks, the amount of grain required would feed a hungry African village for a year."**

Not surprisingly, the US is the dynamo of the global biofuel industry. In 2007 it burned about a quarter of its national maize supply as fuel - from a total harvest of 414m tons of grain, it used 81m tons for producing ethanol and exported 106m tons, making it the world's leading grain exporter. 1180 per cent of the 62 US biofuel distillation plants now being built are completed by late 2008, the grain used for fuel will reach 114m tons, 28 per cent of the projected 2008 harvest. At least 8m hectares (20m acres) of maize, wheat, soya and other crops which once provided animal feed and food have already been taken out of production in the US. That could leave a yawning export gap.

Lester Brown, director of the Earth Policy Institute in Washington DC, said on 4 April that land turned over to biofuel production in the US in the last two years would have fed nearly 250m people with average grain needs. The same week the World Bank predicted rice price rises of 55 per cent in 2008. The International Food Policy Research Institute believes the average global grain price has risen by 30 per cent because of demand for biofuels; the International Monetary Fund estimates that 20 to 30 per cent of the food price increases in the past two years are accounted for by biofuels.

Not long ago hunger appeared to be in gradual retreat. Not any more. In 2004 researchers at the University of Minnesota said they expected the number of hungry and malnourished people in the world to fall from over 800m to 625m by 2025. In early 2007 they updated this to include the biofuel effect. **The result? They expect the number of hungry people to rise to 1.2 billion by 2025.**

Of course, some people are making good livings from biofuel, thanks to lavish support from Washington. The International Institute for Sustainable Development's Global Subsidies Initiative says that under existing policies the US biofuels industry will, in aggregate, benefit from support worth over \$92 billion from 2006 to 2012. The subsidies have been condemned by the director general of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, Jacques Diouf, who said they were depriving people of food. Opening the UN food crisis summit in

Rome in June, he said he found it "in-comprehensible" that subsidies worth US\$ 11-12 billion in 2006 were used to divert 100m tonnes of cereals from human consumption, "mostly to satisfy a thirst for fuels for vehicles". The FAO estimates US subsidies for the production of corn ethanol at \$11-12bn.

Professor John Beddington is the British Government's chief scientific adviser. In March 2008 he said: "It is hard to imagine how we can see a world growing enough crops to produce renewable energy and at the same time meet the enormous increase in the demand for food which is quite properly going to happen as we alleviate poverty. The agriculture industry needs to double its food production, using less water than today ... Some of the biofuels are hopeless. The idea that you cut down rainforest to actually grow biofuels seems profoundly stupid." A British Government report, due last Friday, was expected to confirm the link between investment in biofuels and the food crisis.

Of course, if biofuels managed not to devour food crops, there would be a case for them. But they are a wasteful way of producing energy, because they use only part of the plant, usually seeds or grains which yield starch that is fermented into bioethanol. Hopes are now rising that so-called second-generation biofuels could be more efficient. They process the inedible parts of the plants and so do not divert food away from the animal or human food chain; but scientists say it will be five to 10 years before they become commercially viable. One example is jatropha, a bush found across the tropics. There are more distant but still credible plans for producing fuel from algae, or by using genetically modified bacteria to convert carbon dioxide.

For the moment, though, biofuels continue to take food directly from the mouths of the starving. They don't have to: the US uses about 21m barrels of oil a day, roughly a quarter of global production. Room for some economies there?

*Alex Kirby is a former BBC environment correspondent. He is now a freelance writer specialising in environmental affairs.* #

## 12th July 2008

### 'Good' biofuels

It is unfortunate that in a justified attack on US biofuels policy Alex Kirby ("Food into fuel tanks", 28 June) makes the all too common error of lumping all biofuels made from "food" crops together in his concluding paragraph and claims that they "continue to take food directly from the mouths of the starving". Every informed commentator on biofuels knows that there are, in fact, some "good" biofuels which can be produced in reasonable quantities sustainably, with significant net reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions and with no predicted impact on their feedstock commodity price. One such feedstock is European feed wheat, currently used to feed animals due to its modest protein content, its unsuitability for human consumption and its relatively low price. Bioethanol produced from European feed wheat in the quantities needed to meet current EU targets will have a negligible effect on future prices of wheat. In addition, the by-product of the ethanol production process retains the protein content which is the basis for the animal feed value of the original wheat so that it is still available for the animal feed market. There is therefore no loss, directly or indirectly, of food available to the human food chain in the production of European wheat-based bioethanol.

The UK biofuels industry, in its infancy, is the only industry associated with the use of agricultural products which must, by law, report its greenhouse gas reduction figures and must demonstrate its sustainability criteria. Is there any good reason why the food industry should not do the same? Why is so much attention given to the effects of the diversion of relatively minuscule proportions of the world's agricultural production into biofuels when much larger proportions of agricultural land are diverted to producing such "essential" non-food crops as tobacco and coffee?

*Ged Russell Technical & Operations Director, Vireo/plc Stokesley, Yorkshire grussell@vireol.com* #

## 2nd August 2008

### Notebook - Not so simple living

LAST WEEK they were marching on behalf of the world's poor in central London, but in Canterbury, bishops at the Lambeth Conference for the last fortnight have been served a cooked breakfast and two other three-course meals every day. As well as the dining halls there is also an open-air barbecue.

It's all too much for Indian and African bishops, who have complained about the "five-star" catering. The Bishop of Kerala in South India said he hated seeing the bishops piling up their plates and then throwing half of it away. "We eat a lot, a lot. There is everything you can think of at breakfast, then three courses at lunch and again at dinner," said Bishop Thomas Samuel, who is calling for the conference to be reduced to 10 days instead of three weeks, and a simpler diet. The Bishop of Mumias in Kenya, Salalah Okumu, was also embarrassed by the lavish meals, confessing: "I will go away having put weight on."

And what about the planet? The Anglican Communion's chief green bishop, George Browning of Canberra, told a plenary for the 670 bishops and their wives that they should hold more church meetings on the Internet and drive smaller cars. Christians, he continued, should share toolboxes, lawnmowers and washing machines with their neighbours. What is more, the bishops must do all this with a smile, said another keen environmentalist, the Bishop of London, Richard Chartres, who added: "Don't go and get measured for a hair shirt. Be cheerful in your efforts." #

# The Universe

## 17th February 2008 Wordsworth's poetical Prelude to fight against climate change

By John Battle

IN 1799, just after the French Revolution, the romantic poet William Wordsworth began writing a long autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*. It took him until the summer of 1805 to complete and was first published in 1814. It relates, in verse, memories and impressions of his childhood and schooldays, as well as his time as a student at Cambridge, including a summer holiday and time spent on his books.

On one occasion, he is by the coast, seated in a cave reading *Don Quixote* by Cervantes when he falls asleep watching the sea and dreams of the boundless desert, "the sandy wilderness, all black and void" out of which a shape appears – a bedouin Arab, high up on a camel, carrying in one hand a stone and in the other, a shell. The bedouin explains to the dreaming Wordsworth that the stone was one of Euclid's elements, connected to the stars, wedding "soul to soul in purest bond of reason", but that in the beautiful shell was "something of more worth". He tells the dreamer to hold it to his ear and he hears an ode "which foretold/Destruction to the children of the earth/By deluge now at hand".

The shell "had more voices than all the wind, with power to exhilarate the spirit, and to soothe through every chimney the heart of human kind". The bedouin, grasping his two treasures, then begins to move on, but looks back, and there the poet sees "over the wilderness diffused, a bed of glittering light." The dreaming poet asks the Bedouin its cause. "It is," said he, "the waters of the deep gathering upon us," and with that he rides off "with the fleet waters of a drowning world in chase of him". There may not have been much sense of climate change at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but with a poet's prescience Wordsworth captures in the image of that stone from the floor of the dry desert, and the shell from the sea, a potent, contrasting lineage of its possible impact. The stone like a piece of rock from the Moon or Mars - symbolises the in-rushing ocean which will reclaim the desert in its flood.

Though called Earth, our planet is 70 per cent water and perhaps could better be called ocean. The effects of melting ice caps and glaciers combined with global warming as a result of past and present human activity on our planet are more than likely to be a rise in the water levels of the ocean. Future floods as the sea reclaims the land – and the desert – are already predicted as our planet warms up by an average of 2°C. To prevent the next 2°C rise, we must reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 90 per cent by 2030. Perhaps the Lenten reminder that we are dust and to dust we shall return, represented by a stone, should be complimented with listening to a shell in the sense that negative abstinences could be supplemented by positive actions as a means of under-taking personal reflection and transformation.

This year the Cafod Lenten fast focuses on our relationship with the rest of creation and how to live more sustainably, caring for the earth and developing alternative livelihoods in our communities. In his Lenten address to the Parliamentary Friends of Cafod, Mark Dowd, the campaign director of Operation Noah, impressed upon us the urgency of the task of tackling climate change. Last year Mark presented the Channel 4 programme **God is Green, which pointed out that the importance of respecting creation is deeply embedded in most of the world's religions. Yet it is overlooked and neglected.** Meanwhile, politics is too slowly waking up to the seriousness of the challenge. As Mark stressed: **"Humanity is sleepwalking its way towards climate disaster.**

The latest science makes for anxious reading. It's as though all the world's nations are trapped in a dark room. "We see the slimmest of exits and an inviting light beckoning beyond, but that door is closing on us." Reminding us of Pope John Paul II's words in 2001 on the need for an ecological conversion, the ecological crisis is "at root a spiritual crisis" which demands a "radical re-orienting of our hearts and minds so that we see the world totally anew".

In her introduction to "From the Heart of the Church", Sr Judith Merkle reminds us that "the Catholic social tradition is about voice and responsibility in the Church and the society." It promotes conscious living and intentional choices about the commitment of energy in a modern society filled with options yet empty of direction." Perhaps becoming conscious – in particular - of the impact of our carbon footprint might enable us to achieve practical change, and make intentional choices that will prove capable of breaking down what Mark Dowd vividly described as our heavily erected carbon defences.

Working for justice and peace means more than reading, thinking or talking about it, it's about the commitment of energy in the way we live our lives: The Cafod Lent campaign suggests we personally address our consumption of water and energy, and get involved with Cafod's climate change work to strengthen government responses to the urgent challenge.

The Walk Lightly Cafod Lenten prayer reminds us that "each leaf, each petal, each grain, each person sings your praises, Creator God ... and yet the land of greed has patented and plundered your splendour, has taken and not shared your gift, has lived as the owner of the world, not guest." And so "the ice is cracked, the rivers dry, the valleys flooded and the snowcaps melt".

It ends: "God our Father, show us how to step gently, how to live simply, how to walk lightly, with respect and love for all that you have made." #

**9th March 2008****\* Fr John Cullen \***

TO care for the Earth and all the living creatures on it is one of the most important responsibilities of humankind. I have written previously about the dedicated people, many of them missionaries, who have been assassinated and died protecting rain forests, the environment and the people whose survival depends of these habitats. Human health, wellbeing and even survival depend on the harmony between all living creatures. Plants, animals and humans need each other to thrive and survive.

Last month, television images showed the slaughter of whales in the Southern Ocean, close to Antarctica, by a Japanese whaling fleet of four ships led by the Nisshin Maru. This huge factory ship had an estimated 50 dead whales in the hold, harpooned to death by the other hunter ships. The video footage taken by the environmental group Greenpeace showed big and small whales being hauled up a ship's ramp to face the flensing knives. It was a pitiful sight.

The present generation of young Japanese people is turning against whaling and seems to prefer fast food; most of the whales end up as pet food. The Japanese government says they do it for scientific research, but how can they need 1,000 whales to discover something they must already know after centuries of hunting. Iceland and Norway are also killing whales but the vast majority of nations are against it. It is senseless destruction of magnificent, sensitive creatures. It indicates an uncaring attitude towards animals. No life should be destroyed unless there is a true natural need, such as sustaining human life and feeding the hungry.

Most nations have a bad record of protecting their own magnificent animals and plant life. The polar bear will soon be on the list of endangered species. Climate change caused by human activity is altering the planet. Thirty to fifty per cent of all species will be extinct by the middle of the next century if we don't act now to stop the emissions of carbon dioxide and methane gasses. Environmental destruction has been justified in the name for what developers and industrialists call "progress". Such wanton waste is, in fact, the opposite. Drilling for oil in the Arctic and burning it as quickly as possible for the greatest possible profit is the greedy goal of the oil companies.

Burning fossil fuels like oil and coal without restraint has to stop. The resulting carbon dioxide is rising into the atmosphere and wrapping the earth in a chemical blanket, causing temperatures to rise rapidly. Politicians and industrialists believed that the massive production of a substitute, ethanol — made from plants, especially corn and edible plant oils — would solve the problem. It has now been discovered that more destructive carbon dioxide gasses are released in the production of ethanol than it would supposedly save. Arable land around the world is used to grow the crops on which the ethanol is based, so there is a drop in food production and a rise in food prices. In India, there is a huge shortage of edible oil and wheat. The poor become poorer and hungrier. Driving cars is, apparently, more important than food production.

Can you blame the poor for fleeing starvation and poverty to the developed nations in the hope of a job and a full stomach for their families? If we are against migration, we had better stop the multinational companies and industrialists exploiting and impoverishing the poor countries in cahoots with their corrupt rulers. It began hundreds of years ago. The slave trade was the foundation of the world economy for 300 years.

There is hope. Brazil is deploying hundreds of troops and forest guards to crack down on illegal logging in the Amazon rain forest which is being cleared to grow soya beans and make ranches for beef production. New legislation to control polluting industries is showing reductions in emissions. The auto industry is moving steadily closer to a car powered by hydrogen fuel cells and electricity.

Consumers are demanding Fairtrade products that are made from renewable and recyclable materials. Above all, there is a growing worldwide awareness of the problem and a desire for change and urgency to save the planet. We all can and should do our part — starting today. #

**23rd March 2008****\* Fr Sean McDonagh, SSC \***

HISTORIANS are agreed that the arrival of Irish monks on the continent of Europe between the fifth and ninth centuries had a major impact on the revival of Christianity in Europe. St. Columban, for example, arrived in Luxeuil in France around 570 and died in Bobbio in Lombardy in 615. While the rule in Irish-founded monasteries was quite strict in comparison to the Benedictines in terms of fasting and recitation of the psalms, awareness of the presence of God in creation was almost universal. Columban, in his sermon Concerning the Faith, counselled the monk, and advised that those who wish to know the great deep (God) must first study the natural world. The love of creation and the ability to find God in creation is very much present in Celtic art which developed during the succeeding centuries. The historian, Fr. Gerry Rice, calls attention to this particularly as it is found in the most celebrated Irish manuscript The Book of Kells.

At the beginning of St Matthew's gospel, the scribe directs our attention to the *chi-rho* sign. These two Greek letters superimposed on each other were a common way of referring to Christ in the early Church.

The *chi-rho* dominates the page and grabs the attention of the reader. The text begins with the words *Christi Generatio* (the genealogy of Christ). By deftly juxtaposing this text and the illustration the scribe wishes to affirm that the birth of Christ is good news, not just for men and women, but for all of God's creation.

To further his argument, Rice points to the illustration on the left side of the page where an otter is eating a fish. The Greek word *Ichthus* (fish) was traditionally understood within Christianity as an acronym for Jesus Christ, Son of God and Saviour. This convergence of both the text and the image proclaims that nature is also nourished by Christ's birth. As if that were not enough to convince even the most sceptical reader, Rich goes on to call attention to a drawing on the page portraying two mice feeding on the host, calmly observed by their traditional enemy, two cats. To complete the picture the cats are carrying rats on their shoulders. Rice argues that the scribe and illustrator are drawing the reader's attention to the vision of peace and harmony which is found in Isaiah, chapter 11: 6 – 9. Traditional enemies in the natural world are reconciled and living together peacefully. All the creatures give up eating meat and return to being herbivores, as originally envisaged in the covenant with Adam and Eve in Gen. 1: 28 – 31.

"The world lies with the lamb, the panther lies down with the kid, calf and lion cub feed together with a little boy to lead them. "The cow and the bear make friends, their young lie down together. The lion eats straw like the ox. The infant plays over the cobra's hole. "Into the viper's lair the young child puts his hand. They do no hurt, no harm, on my holy mountain, For the country is filled with the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters swell the sea."

The point of all of this, according to Rice, is that Christ is seen as bringing peace and salvation to all creation, not only humans, by his life, death and resurrection. This is all framed within the theology of the Cosmic Christ which we find in both John's gospel and Paul's epistles (Jn 1: 1- 18). Paul puts it very clearly in the letter to the Church at Colossae; he is the first born from the dead, so that he should be first in every way; because God wanted all perfection to be found in him and all things to be reconciled through him and for him, everything in heaven and on earth, when he made his peace by his death on the Cross ( Col. 1: 18-20).

In the Western Church, the Irish theologian John Eriugenia (ninth century), who taught at the court of Charles the Bald, elaborated the doctrine of the Cosmic Christ after reading the works of Greek Fathers such as Gregory of Nyssa. Rice, however, is convinced that Eriugena's enthusiasm for the Pauline doctrine owed as much to his Celtic roots, where the natural world was seen as pregnant with images of the divine, as to his reading of the Greek Fathers. On Easter morning, the preface of the Mass pro-claims the wonderful message that the joy of the resurrection renews the whole world. #

**13th April 2008**

**\* Fr Sean McDonagh, SSC \***

IN last week's article I outlined how St Thomas Aquinas saw all of creation as a reflection of God's glory, rather than any one creature. Aquinas was a member of the newly-formed mendicant order, the Dominicans. This week I look at the life of St Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscans. Members of this order were also mendicants because they begged for their food. Mendicant orders had their residences in the towns and cities of Europe – unlike the Benedictines whose monasteries were situated in rural areas.

Unlike St Thomas Aquinas or St Bernard of Clairvaux, who were the sons of noblemen, Francis's father, Pietro Bernardone, was a cloth merchant. Francis was not overly interested in joining his father's business and pursuing the life of a cloth merchant. He began to look for something more fulfilling. At the age of 24 he was sitting in a church in Assisi when he heard Christ on the Cross asking him to rebuild his Church. Initially, he thought that this referred to a small chapel in the area which had fallen into ruin. With no resources to accomplish the task, Francis turned to begging for money and materials to repair the church. He even sold some of his father's goods and used the money to buy building materials.

His well-to-do father naturally was annoyed and embarrassed. He dragged Francis into the town square where he demanded that Francis repay what he had taken from him. Francis took off his clothes, gave them to his father, and announced that he did not wish to have anything more to do with him. Unlike many other ascetics in the first millennium, who viewed nature in a very ambivalent way, Francis had a very positive attitude towards creation. He recognised the presence of God in creation and felt no need to *fuga mundi* (flee the world) as many hermits had done from the time of St Anthony in Egypt.

He did not reject the world as such, rather he rejected the mentality which placed trust in material possessions, power over people and social prestige, rather than in God alone. Francis recognised the presence of God in the whole of creation. One of the great legacies of Francis is that he expanded the notion of 'neighbour' to include, not merely the human family, but the whole of creation. Francis's sermon to the birds exemplifies his fraternal attitude towards creation.

His biographer Thomas of Celano writes that "Francis came to a certain place near Bevagna, in Italy, where a great number of birds of various kinds had come together, namely: doves, crows and some others, popularly known as daws. When the most blessed servant of God, Francis, saw them... he left his companions on the road and ran eagerly towards the birds. When he was close enough to them, he saw that they were waiting expectantly for him and he greeted the birds with the words 'May the Lord give you peace.'

He was surprised when the birds did not fly away. He realised that prayer enabled the birds to understand and respond to his exhortations. Francis begged them to listen to the word of God and addressed them as if they were humans; 'My brothers, birds, you should praise your creator very much and always love Him; He gave

you feathers to clothe you; wings so that you can fly and whatever else was necessary for you. 'God made you noble among the creatures, He gave you a home in the purity of the air. Though you neither sow nor reap he nevertheless protects and governs you without any solicitude on your part.'

Finally, Francis blessed them and gave them permission to fly away. Celano writes that the birds "rejoiced in a wonderful way" and Francis passed through their midst and continued on his way. Francis understood that his mission was to pro-claim the Gospel to humanity, and afterwards to every other creature. From then on he admonished all birds, animals and reptiles to praise and love their creator every day. His deeds matched his words. He was gentle with earthworms and lifted them from the path so they would not be crushed underfoot. With Francis there was no yearning to manipulate or subdue either humans or the rest of creation. For him, all creation pointed the way to God, their creator. #

**13th April 2008**

### **Priests launch new environmental drive**

CATHOLIC priests in Weston-super-Mare have launched a drive to get their parishioners to think and care for the environment in a spirit of stewardship. Canon Gabriel Leyden from the 'Parish of Corpus Christi The Universe: "The environment is God's creation and I suppose we, have not looked after it that well over the years. "Our task is not to pollute it but to look after everything that God made, and which as Genesis says 'is indeed very good'. We need to look after God's given environment." "I often forget that God is present in nature and we must do more to take care of our planet," Fr Martin Quenon, of Our Lady of Lourdes Church, has also encouraged people to be 'greener' in a recent sermon.

#### **Creation**

"Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute, it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to come, it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation," he said. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has added its voice to that of many campaign groups, and more recently, some companies, in calling for the protection of the environment. #

**20th April 2008**

### **\* Fr Sean McDonagh, SSC \***

ST BONAVENTURE, who was born in Bagnorea in Tuscany in 1221, gave theological underpinning to St Francis's teaching on creation. At the age of 22 he entered the Franciscans. Immediately after taking his vows he was sent to the University of Paris — the most prestigious university in Medieval Europe. There he studied under Alexander of Hales, who was also a Franciscan. This is an indication of the distance that the Franciscans had come in a single generation; from beginning as a small group of wandering preachers, they were now serious scholars at the University of Paris.

While in Paris, Bonaventure became friends with St Thomas Aquinas and also enjoyed the friendship of the king, St Louis. At the age of 35, he was chosen as General of the Franciscan Order. Because of his learning and diplomacy he restored calm to the order which had been disturbed by internal dissensions. The starting point for Bonaventure's theology, including his theology of creation, is the love which marks the life of the Trinity. According to Bonaventure, creation shares in a real, but limited way, the mystery of the generation of the Word from the Father. He uses the Latin word *em emanatio* (emanation) to capture the notion of creation being born from the womb of the Triune God of love.

For many authors, classical and modern, creation is often seen merely as the stage on which human history unfolds. In itself, it is not important. It only achieves any significance because it is the backdrop for individual or collective human action. Bonaventure's does not share this myopic view. Creation spills forth from the divine community of love and, therefore, has its own inherent value. All of creation: the sea, the rocks, the trees, the animals and birds are related to the Trinity. Since creation manifests the glory of God, it follows that creation can lead people to know God and praise His wonderful gift. In other words, creation has a sacramental role, as everything in the universe is a sign of God's presence.

Bonaventure uses the analogy of a stained glass window to illustrate the ability of each creature to teach us something special about God. On the outside, the light is perceived as having the same colour, but once it hits the variously-coloured panes in the window, the light is refracted into different hues and colours. In the same way, every species and creature gives us a unique understanding of the Divine reality. Bonaventure tells us that this is the way Francis saw the world. He saw every creature in the world as a mirror of God's presence, and, if approached correctly, a step leading to God. In his book about St Francis, Bonaventure wrote: "In beautiful things he saw beauty itself and through his vestiges imprinted on creation he followed his Beloved everywhere, making from all things a ladder by which he could climb up and embrace him who is utterly desirable."

Bonaventure is adamant that for both Francis and himself, the world is beautiful and a sacrament of God, precisely because God became human in the person of Jesus. In other words, the Incarnation is central to the Franciscan understanding of everything, including the cosmos. Francis was not a nature-mystic who happened also to be a Christian. It is precisely because of Francis's love of Jesus in his humanity that humans and every other creature take on such positive meaning. Every creature spoke to Francis of the love of God which found its ultimate

expression in the face of Christ. According to Bonaventnre, creation became a ladder to ascend so that he could embrace "him who is utterly desirable."

Focusing on the wider creation does not mean that Bonaventnre does not see a special role for humans. The Franciscan theologian Sister Iliia Deli writes that "A world that manifested the glory of God but did not include some creature able to perceive and revel in that glory would make little sense. "Indeed, this is not the case. Rather, God freely creates a glorious universe and calls forth humans, who are endowed with the freedom to participate in this divine artistic splendour." Humans are called to be bringers of peace and reconciliation to all creation, in imitation of what Jesus himself did for all. They are called to love God, each other and all creation. This means that we avoid exploiting or disfiguring creation. #

**18th May 2008**

**Fr Sean McDonagh, SSC**

IF GM crops are the panacea for solving the food and energy crisis as Robin Ma Kie alleges in *The Observer* (27 April, 2008) and Kevin Myers, - "If Ever The World Needed GM Food Production, It's Right Now". *The Irish Independent*, (29 April 2008), it seems strange that it has not been endorsed by the recently released. report from the international Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). The IAASTD report is a unique collaboration between public bodies such as the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Health Organisation and representatives from governments, NGOs and scientific bodies. Taking four years to complete and involving the work of 400 scientists, it is a thorough sifting of the evidence about agriculture and food production, running to 2,500 pages.

It does not endorse the claims of the biotech industry that GM crops will feed the world and produce sufficient biofuels for global transport: It argues that a drastic change in agricultural practices is necessary in order to counteract soaring food prices, hunger, social inequality and environmental degradation. It maintains that GM crops are controversial and that they will not play a substantial role in addressing they challenge of climate change, loss of biodiversity, food security, poverty and hunger. It did not rule out a role for GM crops in the future, but highlighted the problems which the current regime of patenting seeds has. on farmers and researches.

Hans Herren, co-chair of IAASTD, believes that a business-as-usual approach is not an option. The re-port maintains that the most pressing agricultural need is to support small-scale farmers who operate in diverse ecosystems. These farmers need to be given access to better knowledge, more appropriate technology geared to farming in their particular location, more credit so that poor farmers are not at the mercy of loan-sharks and better roads and infrastructure so that farmers can get their produce to markets. Professor Janice Jiggins of Wageningen University, one of the contributors to the IAASTD report quetioned whether GM crops had been proven as safe. (Sean Poulter, "GM,food `not the answer to world's food shortage crisis, says report", *The Daily Mail*, 16 April 2008

The report concludes that: "Assessment of the technology lags behind its development, information is anecdotal and contradictory, and uncertainty about' possible benefits and damage is unavoidable (John Vidal, 'Change in Farming Can Feed the World', *The Guardian*,16 April 2008): The GM lobby often accuse those opposed to GM as being anti science. Nothing is further from the truth. Robert Watson, Director of IAASTD, has pointed out that, "investment in agriculture science has de-created, yet we urgently need sustainable ways to produce food. Incentives for science to address the is-sues that matter to the poor, are weak". (John Vidal, 'Change in Farming Can Feed the World', *The Guardian*, April 16; 2008). -

Guihem Calvo, who is an adviser with the Ecological and Earth Science division of UNESCO, one of the agencies which sponsored the report, told a Paris news conference that: "We must develop agriculture which is less dependent, on fossil fuels, favours the use - of locally available -resources and explores the use of natural processes such as crop rotation and the use of organic fertilisers" (Ibid). The IAASTD report argues small-scale farmers and ecologically sensitive ways of farming are the way forward. Furthermore, it believes that the agricultural knowledge of indigenous people and peasant farmers can play an important role, alongside agricultural science, in meeting the-food demands of today.

This reinforces my experience, waiting with tribal and peasant farmers in Mindanao, in the Southern Philippines, during the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. I, and many missionaries who have worked on the' ground in the Majority World, believe that famine and hunger have more to do with the absence of land reform, tack of access to ,cheap credit and basic technologies rather than with the lack of GM seeds. The bias against women, which is so prevalent in both international and national agricultural policy, is also a major factor. According to the Nobel Prize winner, Wangari Maathal, African women receive less than 10 per cent of the credit given to small farmers even though women are "the primary caretakers, holding significant responsibility for tilling the land and feeding the children." #

**18th May 2008**

**\* The West keeps feeding the devil while the poor starve \***

by John Battle

REPORTS that children in Bangladesh are surviving day-to-day on food pies made of mud, a little butter and salt, .because their parents can no longer afford to buy them a portion of rice, appeared in the press this month. At the same time it was reported that we in Britain throw away a third of the food we buy, on average £610 per family a year. While rising world food prices unlinked to both fossil fuel price rises (oil and gas) and

the shift to biofuels, if we were to buy less and eat up what we buy, we would as a country cut back on 18 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions – the equivalent to taking a fifth of our cars off the road. In other words, our waste' of food is contributing more to climate change than our use of private cars.

The Dutch university of Turente has come up with a water footprint calculator to work out the water use in the manufacture and transport of everyday foodstuffs. It spells out how much water has been used in the manufacture of the products we buy. Their research uncovers some astonishing findings. A slice of white bread takes up 40 litres of water, a burger 2,400 litres, a kilogram of cheddar 5,000 litres. Their list goes on. A pint of your favourite beer requires 160 litres of water, a 125ml glass of wine 120 litres and a pint of milk 1,750litres: And non-water based products such as wheat or barley absorb much more. **Perhaps not surprisingly a kilogram of beef comes out as one of the worst offenders: it has a water footprint of a massive 3,900 litres.** Our everyday, developed foodstuffs are using up excessive resources.

Wasting food is not only environmentally damaging in its disposal and decomposition, it is throwing away valuable water resources. No wonder in years past leaving food on your plate at a family meal was referred to, particularly in poorer families finding it hard-to make ends meet, as **'feeding the devil'**.

Meanwhile, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation, 37 developing countries are desperate for basic foodstuffs, unable to cope with high wheat and rice prices. World food stocks are at record lows, and exporting countries such as Australia have experienced drought and implemented wheat export bans. There have been food riots in Bangladesh, Burkino Faso, Cameroon, Uzbekistan and China. Tragically the cyclone flooding of the Irrawaddy delta in Burma has come at the worst time – overrun by salt sea water at precisely the time that the next rice planting should be undertaken. There are already wheat exporting bans from producing countries such as Argentina, Sudan, Russia, India and China. Of course, there is a connection to record world oil prices, though. in fact there is no real shortage of supply. OPEC are holding back supplies from the market. Middle East countries are all benefiting from high oil revenues at the present time.

As usual it is net oil importers, particularly developing countries, that are now being driven deeper into poverty. High oil prices are undermining local agriculture which needs oil and its products for cultivation, production, power, transportation, fertilisers and pesticides. Food production depends on oil-based petrochemicals, so if the cost of these imports rockets farmers are unable to get a good crop yield.

But pressure of basic wheat and rise prices has other causes. First, both India and China have been going through a period of exceptional economic growth, and as their populations have got better incomes and moved into towns and cities there has been a significant shift in eating habits from rice to meat-based meals (beef and chicken). But both beef and chicken absorb massive amounts of wheat or corn in their production. **Cows are fed maize and the food footprint shift from rice to meat has put pressure on wheat and corn steaks.** Corn stocks in the grain silos of America are at record lows. Meanwhile, the world rice price has increased by 74% in the past 12 months, along with 40% increases in corn, 87% in soya, and 140% in wheat prices.

There has also been another key shift affecting food prices, namely the conversion of basic food stocks such as grain into oil to produced corn-based ethanol as an alternative fuel to oil and gas. The demand for biofuels has not only meant using up land to grow grain, but has put pressure on the grain price itself. It would be the ultimate tragedy if 21st century mass famine was to be the outcome not only of commodity price speculation, but of misconceived and failed efforts to address both climate change and unchecked economic growth. The great optimism of economic trickle-down is rapidly evaporating into an unprecedented world hunger crisis while basic food is beyond the reach of millions. As the great English poet-critic William Empson put it, 'The waste remains, the waste remains and kills.' #

**25th May 2008**

**\* Fr Sean McDonagh, SSC \***

I HAVE come that they may have life, and have it to the full." John 10:10. The heart of the Christian message can be summed up by these words from Saint John's Gospel. That is why the ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which takes place in Bonn, Germany from May 19 to 30 2008, is arguably the most important conference in the world this year.

The reason is simple: we are now witnessing the sixth largest extinction of life on the planet since life began, 3.7 billion years ago. If we don't stop this immediately, future generations will be forced to live on a biologically impoverished planet. During the past two years there has been a sea-change in public awareness about the dangers of climate change. No such awareness has yet emerged regarding the destructive consequences of the massive extinction of species.

In Time magazine April/May 2000, the renowned Harvard biologist, Edward O'Wilson, stated that he believes the "quenching of life's exuberance will be more consequential to humanity than all the present day global warming, ozone depletion and pollution combined". The scale of the current extinction spasm is truly astounding. When he wrote *The Diversity of Life* in the early 1990s, Professor Wilson estimated that 27,000 species were being pushed over the precipice of extinction each year. That figure now seems woefully inadequate. David Attenborough claimed in the BBC programme *State of the Planet* in 2000, that unless major protective measures were taken immediately, between one third and one half of the species on the planet could

be extinct within 50 to 100 years. The possibility that human action could ruin the living world in such a short period of time should have sent a shock wave around the world. It should have rallied governments, corporations, religions and citizens to protect the delicate web of life which links all species, including humans.

I checked all the Irish and British broadsheet newspapers the following day and there was not a single comment on Attenborough's statement. We seem to be blind to what is happening to our living world. Extinction is not like death, where when a member of a species dies, another is born to take its place. Nothing can bring back a species which has become extinct. It is against this background that one can appreciate the importance of the UN Convention on Biodiversity for the future well-being of the planet, adopted at the Earth Summit in June 1992. As of 2008, 190 countries, including the UK, have signed the Convention. In 2002, the Parties to the CBD adopted the *Gran Canaria* Declaration. This included a 16-point plan to slow the rate of plant extinction around the world by the year 2010. -

The Convention recognised for the first time in international law that the conservation of biological diversity is the "common concern of humankind". The agreement covers all ecosystems, species and genetic resources. It attempts to link the traditional conservation approach to the natural world, with the economic goal of using biological resources in a sustainable way. In this context, it sets out principles for the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits accruing from using genetic resources, especially those that have a commercial value. Through means of the *Cartagena Protocol* on Biosafety, it now covers the rapidly expanding area of biotechnology.

Promoting biodiversity is not just about protecting plants and animals. It is also about people and our need for food security, medicines, fresh air and water, shelter and a clean and healthy environment in which to live. It beggars belief that, for a Church that claims to be pro-life, there is only a half a paragraph on the loss of biodiversity in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, published in 2004. Paragraph 466 fails to capture either the magnitude of the current extinction spasm, nor the urgency with which it must be addressed. Concern for other species is not a new-fangled idea. St Basil prayed: "O God, enlarge with us a sense of fellowship with all living creatures, our brothers and sisters the animals, to who you have the earth as their home in common with us. May we realise that they live, not for us alone, but for themselves and for you, and that they love the sweetness of life." #

**1st June 2008**

**\* Fr Sean McDonagh, SSC \***

A COUPLE of weeks ago I wrote about the food crisis, which is causing pain, suffering and hunger for many people and serious political problems for many governments. The crisis has been seized by some commentators as an opportunity to, once again, promote GM crops. The most common argument from proponents of GM crops is that genetically engineered food and medicine will be necessary to feed a growing world population. They argue that, if world population levels reaches nine billion, it will be necessary either to increase the land area now under cultivation or improve crop yield by new technologies such as genetic engineering.

In 1992, the then chief executive of the biotech corporation, Monsanto, Robert Shapiro, used the 'feed the world' argument as a justification for developing GM crops in an interview he gave to *The Harvard Business Review*. The rising cost of food which has sparked violent protests in many countries in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Central and Latin America has been seized on by the agribusiness corporations and others as a new opportunity to push GM crops. One of the latest voices in this chorus is Robin Mc Kie, the science editor of *The Observer*. On 27 April he proclaimed that "As the world begins to starve, it's time to take GM seriously".

**There is very little evidence to support this argument.** In fact, most of the data points in the opposite direction. In 2003, Aaron deGrassi, a researcher at the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University, published an analysis of the GM crops that biotech companies were developing for Africa. These included cotton, maize and sweet potato. He discovered that conventional breeding and good ecological management produced a far higher yield at a fraction of the cost of genetic engineering. At that time the GM research on sweet potato was approaching its 12th year. 12 scientists were involved and the project had already cost \$6 million. The result indicated that the yield had increased by 18%. On the other hand, conventional sweet potato breeding, working with a smaller budget, had produced a virus-resistant variety with 100% yield increase. More importantly for subsistence farmers, the non-transgenic sweet potato had not been patented (George Monbiot. Force-fed a diet of hype, *The Guardian*, 7 October, 2004).

A 2007 study conducted by a Kansas State University agronomist, Dr Barney Gordon, suggested that the yield from "Roundup Ready" soya was nine per cent less than conventional varieties (*Better Crops*, Vol 91, No 4: 12-13). This contradicts the claims of advocates of GM technology, who claim it boosts yields. He noticed that the GM crop recovered only when he added manganese. This led him to conclude that the genetic modification hindered the crop's take-up of the essential element from the soil. Even with the addition of manganese, the GM crop still only reached the yield of the conventional soya.

A similar situation seems to have happened with cotton in the US, where the total crop declined as GM technology took over (Geoffrey, Lean, *Exposed: The Great GM Crops Myth*, *The Independent*. 20 April 2008). A report by J Fernandez-Cornejo, and Caswel from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in

April 2006 stated that: "Currently available GM crops do not increase the yield potential of a hybrid variety... in fact, yield may even decrease if the varieties used to carry the herbicide-tolerant or insect-resistant genes are not the highest yielding cultivars.

On the wider front of sustainable agriculture, researchers Pretty and Hine from Essex University assessed the viability and productivity of 208 sustainable farms from 52 countries in 2001. They found that farmers had achieved substantial increases in food production per hectare. The gains ranged from 50 per cent to 100 per cent for rain-fed crops, and five per cent to 10 per cent for irrigated. Probably even more important, they found that sustainable agriculture and organic farming provide a stable yield by minimising long-term yield volatility. This can be due to adverse climatic occurrences such as droughts, floods or windstorms

In January 2005, the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) published a report based on studies in both China and India. These showed that farmers who switched to organic agriculture achieved higher earnings and a better standard of living. In China organic agriculture is growing steadily. Exports from China jumped from less than \$1 million in the mid-1990s to \$142 million in 2003. I will continue discussing the crucially important topic of food and food production in the next few articles. #

## 1st June 2008 Vatican Nuncio address UN on growing food crisis

THE Vatican's representative to the United Nations has said that greater support of the world's small farmers would allow them to produce more food in a sustainable manner and help address chronic hunger and malnutrition around the globe. Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the apostolic nuncio at the UN, was speaking during a meeting of the world body's Commission on Sustainable Development. He urged investment to address food prices and the global production and distribution of food, especially in Africa.

He also called for agricultural policies that "re-discover the path of reason and reality" so that the needs of food production and the need to be good stewards of the earth are balanced. In addition to investing in small farmers, the archbishop urged the commission to undertake greater efforts to ease the impact of environmental change and financial realities which impact on food production. "Indeed, this food crisis should not be measured merely by the rise in costs throughout the international food markets, but also by the physical, mental and spiritual cost of those who are unable to provide for themselves and their families," he said.

Noting that 70 per cent of the world's poor live in the same rural areas where widespread chronic malnourishment persists, Archbishop Migliore said the food produced by small farmers in local communities would ease hunger and malnutrition.

### Solidarity

It was vital that the world continued to address challenges such as climate change, harmful agricultural subsidies, fair trade, environmental degradation and land re-form, he added. "Through greater international solidarity and increased concern for the most vulnerable within our societies, we can address the immediate challenges while still working to ensure that the progress of today becomes the cornerstone for a more just and secure tomorrow," he said. #

## 1st June 2008 \* The Universe Comment \*

MOST of us have already begun to feel the negative effects of the latest rises in global food prices, with sharp increases in the price of even the most basic food-stuffs. With fuel prices also spiralling out of control, the impact on our entire way of life is becoming noticeable and people in the 'developed' world who'd already been living marginal lives are now beginning to suffer genuine hardship. Whilst mounting debt, or even the loss of our home, is an awful prospect, we still need to spare a thought for those most severely affected by this economic mismanagement – the one billion people who spend most of their daily income in search of food.

**The current food crisis casts "a red light of alarm" on structural injustices in the agricultural economy worldwide,** Archbishop Silvano Tomasi told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva this week. It was the second strong statement in less than a week by Vatican officials on the food crisis, which has sparked riots in several countries in recent months.

You can understand the urgency of our Church's concern – worldwide food prices have risen 45 per cent over the last nine months, with the price of rice increasing 83 per cent since December, according to figures from the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation in Rome. Every week we are seeing the price of fuel reach a new record high, and that impact can be felt right down the global supply chain, with significant increases to the price we pay for those goods at the counter. Global monetarism anticipates modest fluctuations in its markets, but the latest heavy surge in food prices is so dramatic that it has now begun to threaten the stability of many developing countries.

According to Archbishop Tomasi, the present crisis: "calls attention to the dysfunction of the global trade system when four million people annually join the ranks of the 854 million plagued by chronic hunger." Understandably, the Church feels the world needs to open its eyes to the worldwide cost of hunger, which so often results in lack of health and education, conflicts, uncontrolled migrations, degradation of the environment, epidemics and even terrorism.

In the west, we spend around 20 per cent of our income on food, and for most of us, high prices mean a struggle to maintain our standard of living. Those on low incomes and pensions may suffer genuine hunger and compromises to their health, but will get through. Not so the one billion people living in poor countries, who are forced to spend nearly all their daily income of 50p per day in search of food. Those responsible for the present crisis simply shrug their shoulders and blame fuel costs, but the truth lies elsewhere. It's not so much a lack of food that's causing the trouble, but a lack of access to agricultural resources.

The worldwide liberalisation of trade in agricultural products has tended to favour multinational businesses and harm production by small farms, which remain the base of food security in developing countries. To address this we need urgent investment in agriculture and rural development, measures to curb food hoarding and price speculation, protection of individual property rights, including those of women, the elimination of unfair food subsidies and the organisation of co-operative structures to remedy the limitations faced by small farms. **In short, we need a new ethos that places the human person – not profit - at the centre of food production, so that the needs of food production, and the need to be good stewards of the earth, are balanced.**

Editor: Joseph Kelly Email: editor@totalcatholic.com

#

15th June 2008

**\* The manufactured truth behind the GM crop myth \***

THE reaction of road hauliers and motorists generally to rising fuel prices really does prove that the penny has not dropped with many regarding the threat posed by global warming. The expectation seems to be that a rising oil price means that the government should abandon the various environmental measures it has taken. The response betrays an attitude that regards taking measures to counter global warming as, at best, a luxury. If the penny had dropped, then motorists would be moving toward other non-oil based forms of transport.

Global warming is not some carefully constructed scare story to make everybody's lives more difficult, it is a genuine threat to the planet brought about mainly through the selfish behaviour of mankind. The crisis has reached such a point that action is needed that goes far beyond recycling the newspapers. The measures required involve a genuine lifestyle change that will mean people driving and flying less. The response of the road hauliers to increased fuel prices in blockading London is all too typical of the type of ignorant approach that got us into this mess in the first place – the ignorance based on a failure to appreciate the need to care for God's earth.

Another environmentally linked crisis is the escalating food shortage engulfing the world. Unfortunately, food shortages have provided a perfect platform for the backers of Genetically Modified (GM) crops to once again wheel out their spurious 'feed the world' arguments. Emanating from the US GM technology was forced on the world by a small group of large corporations seeking to gain control of the food chain. The US pretty much swallowed the line whole about the need to grow GM to feed the world, but Europe did not.

The European Union refused to admit GM - technology in wholesale. There were some experiments, but not the full-scale embracing of the technology that was seen in the US. A number of African countries proved similarly resistant. The resulting desperation of the GM lobby can be seen over recent years in its resorting to name-calling along the lines that those who opposed the technology were denying food to hungry people. This was described by some as a crime-against humanity.

The argument about GM crops being needed to feed the world is spurious and has sadly taken on a new lease of life now, with the additional call for crops to provide bio-fuels. The demand for crops from the population of the world to eat and use as fuel is said to make the argument for GM technology now irresistible. It is interesting in these debates to see lobby groups each lock onto the part of the argument that suits their purposes. For example, the population control brigade use food short-ages and environmental catastrophe as the rationale to push their creed.

A closer look at the evidence on GM crops shows, as fellow Universe columnist and environmental expert Fr Sean McDonagh pointed out a couple of weeks ago, that there is no proof that GM does provide more crops from given space than other more traditional methods of production. The truth is that there would be enough food to go round in this world if it were only distributed on a fair and just basis. There is no need for GM or some of the more lurid, almost eugenic, solutions on population-control suggested-to ensure-that-the-world-can-feed-itself.

The final point that sinks the argument of the GM corporations is terminator gene technology. **How can a corporation that seeks to sell its product on the basis of its utility to feed people also insist on the use of terminator genes?** Terminator genes are the absolute antithesis of life. They stop the plant from reproducing itself, thereby forcing poor farmers to buy new seed every year. The insistence, by the corporations that push GM, on the introduction of the terminator gene underlines their true motivations which are control of the food chain. Once a limited number of corporations get that control they will literally be able to decide who lives and who dies, where and when.

It is for this reason that Catholics who believe in the sanctity of life should oppose GM crops and get behind Progressio's excellent campaign to stop terminator genes. Those who care about life issues need to take individual responsibility as to how they live their lives but they also need to act in the political arena to oppose the advance of those who seek to destroy life in such a blatant manner.

#

**13th July 2008 Faiths unite to call for Climate Change Bill**

FAITH leaders in Scotland, including Cardinal Keith O'Brien, have met cabinet secretary John Swinney to call for a strong Scottish Climate Change Bill. The cardinal, together with Moderator David Lunan and Imam Muhammad Ruzwan, highlighted that faith leaders could play an active role in helping the Scottish government pro-mote and implement solutions to climate change in their communities. But they insisted that the government had a duty to engage with the Scottish public and must not forget the millions of people living in poverty in developing countries who are already becoming the worst affected. The three faith leaders were representing their respective international aid agencies — SCIAF, Christian Aid and Islamic Relief — which are members of the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland coalition.

**Constructive**

Following the meeting, Cardinal O'Brien said: "We welcomed the opportunity to meet with the cabinet secretary and had an open and constructive meeting. The Government should be commended on setting the ambitious targets they have outlined in their consultation. "All faiths are concerned about the ethical and social implications of climate change, especially for those already living in poverty in the developing world. This is not just an environmental problem. "That is why the moderator, imam and I, together with our respective international aid agencies, have called on the government to back the sensible proposals being put forward by the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland coalition." The proposals include new funding for developing countries to help them adapt to the challenges they face and adopting targets to ensue the Scottish government is held to account for meeting greenhouse gas reductions. #

**20th July 2008 Anger at Spain bill to give apes more rights than unborn**

A SPANISH bishop has criticised a bill which is pending in Spain's Congress of Deputies which would extend human rights to monkeys and apes. Attacking the idea of giving monkeys rights denied to unborn children, Bishop Jose Munilla Aguirre of Palencia called the proposed law a "radical denial of the concept of a person". Both abortion and embryonic stem-cell research are legal in Spain. "In this logic of irrationality, 100,000 children are sacrificed annually in Spain (through abortion), while everyone in the Congress of Deputies has mobilised in defence of monkeys," he wrote in a statement titled 'From Evolution to Involution: We Return to the Monkey'.

"We freeze human embryos as if they were guinea pigs from a laboratory, while we prohibit experimentation with monkeys," he said. "Spain has become the first nation in the world to recognise for monkeys three fundamental rights of man: the right to life, right to liberty and the right to not be tortured physically or psychologically." The environmental commission of Spain's parliament has approved uniting the country with the mission of the international Great Ape Project, an organization that pushes for the expansion of rights once reserved for humans to chimpanzees, orangutans, bonobos, or pygmy chimpanzees, and gorillas based on their genetic similarity to people.

**Critics**

Supporter Joan Herrera of the Initiative for Catalonia-Greens Party, which introduced the proposal along with the country's governing Socialist Party, has pointed out the "evolutionary and genetic proximity between the human genome and that of the apes, which have a 98 per cent resemblance." However, the bill, which sets into motion the legal prohibition of experimenting on monkeys in Spain, has angered critics who believe the government should prioritise nurturing human, rather than animal, life.

In the meantime, a statement from the Great Ape Project congratulated the Spanish government for being the first "important parliament" in history to announce its support of the rights of primates. The organisation said that "simple animal protection laws are not enough" to defend apes. The Socialist Party said that it was not giving monkeys "human rights" but protection from mistreatment, enslavement, torture, death and extinction. If the bill is passed, it would also ban the use of apes in circuses, television advertisements and filming, and improve their living conditions in the more than 300 zoos across Spain. #

**3rd August 2008 \* Fr Sean McDonagh, SSC \***

CARE for creation has become a central theme of Pope Benedict XVI's pontificate. During his recent visit to Australia, he told dignitaries gathered to welcome him at Government House in Sydney that "the need to protect the environment" was of paramount importance. The following day, addressing a crowd of more than 250,000 young people who had gathered for World Youth Day 2008, he spoke about the feeling of awe for God's creation which he experienced during his long plane journey from Rome to Sydney. "The views afforded of our planet from the air were truly wondrous. The sparkle of the Mediterranean, the grandeur of the north African desert, the lushness of Asia's forests, the vastness of the Pacific Ocean, the horizon upon which the sun rose and set, and the majestic splendour of Australia's natural beauty ... it is as though one catches glimpses of the Genesis creation story — light and darkness, the sun and the moon, the waters, the earth and living creatures; all of which are 'good' in God's eyes. Immersed in such beauty, who could not echo the words of the psalmist in praise of the Creator, 'how majestic is your name in all the earth'.

It was against this background that he delivered his message about environmental destruction. "Perhaps reluctantly we come to acknowledge that there are also scars which mark the surface of the earth: erosion,

deforestation, the squandering of the world's mineral and ocean resources in order to fuel an insatiable consumption." He went on to challenge the young pilgrims: "The concerns for non-violence, sustainable development, justice and peace, and care for our environment are of vital importance for humanity." One year earlier, in response to a question from a priest, he told an audience in northern Italy to link religious teaching to the concerns young people have about the environment. Against the background of beautiful Alpine peaks and colourful meadows, he told his audience that "nature itself tells us that some things are naturally right and some are naturally wrong."

The Pope insisted that, in the Christian view, the natural moral code is not an arbitrary list of do's and don'ts thought up by religious leaders or resulting from a majority vote, but is part of human nature and the result of being created by God. Humans are special creatures precisely because they have the ability "to listen to the voice of the Creator and, in this way, know what is good and what is bad". "I would propose a combination between a secular way and a religious way, the way of faith. Everyone today can see that (humans) man could destroy the foundation of his (her) existence – his (her) earth – and, therefore, we can no longer simply use this earth, this reality entrusted to us, to do what we want or what appears useful and promising at the moment, but we must respect the inherent laws of creation,"

The Pope explained that the first thing young people can learn is that "our earth speaks to us, and we must listen if we want to survive. The destruction of the environment is a stark example of how future survival requires that people obey the laws of nature, especially when everyone else is taking shortcuts that may increase their pleasure at the moment, but are obviously damaging in the long term." He continued: "It might not be that great of a reach to help young people understand that the same natural voice telling them littering is bad, clear-cutting a forest is a shame, and that water and clean air are precious resources is really saying that life is precious. We must not only care for the earth, but we must respect one another. Only with absolute respect for this creature of God, this image of God which is man, only with respect for living together on this earth can we move forward."

The Pope concluded that priests and other religious teachers should try to use "the obvious paths" opened up by secular moral concerns, such as ecology, to lead Christian young people to "the true voice of conscience," which is communicated in Catholic moral teaching. "Through a journey of patient education, I think we can all learn to live and to find true life." Pope Benedict's approach to the environment is summed up in his message to the 92nd Social Week in France on November 2007. He wrote that: "A moral awakening in favour of the environment is needed, and rich countries should not abuse the resources of developing countries." #

### 3rd August 2008

### \* Animal Welfare must not be a second priority \*

LETTER OF THE WEEK: For nearly two centuries, animal welfarists have been protesting about Catholic cruelty to animals in Spain.

It seems only reasonable to highlight the religious character of 'blood fiestas' and the resounding lack of disapproval from Spanish clergy towards bullfighting. In the 1890s, the situation became intolerable for humanitarians when the *Catholic Dictionary* augmented the view of leading theologians that "brutes are made for man who has the same right over them which he has over plants or stones". During the early decades of the 20th century, Catholics in Britain became uncomfortable with the accusation of a "general indifference" towards animal suffering. A retreat from Christianity by growing numbers of animal advocates was taken seriously by the Catholic press, who sought to redress the damage that draconian theology had inflicted upon the reputation of the faith.

Indeed *The Universe* afforded extensive coverage to condemnation of 'bull fighting during 1923 which contained the encouraging words of an Italian cardinal in support of all "efforts in civilised countries towards fostering the feeling of pity for animals".

Now we hear (Anger at Spain bill to give apes more right than unborn, *The Universe*, Sunday July 20) of a Spanish bishop taking an overdue interest in animal protection issues, and the news is not uplifting. Bishop Jose Munilla Aguirre of Palencia criticised a bill pending in Spain's Congress of Deputies that would extend human rights to monkeys and apes, on the grounds that it gave rights to apes that were currently denied to the unborn.

I certainly hope that the 'anger' felt by Bishop Aguirre was not shared by many readers, as it would be a tragedy for the Church to adopt an attitude of resentment towards progress in the protection of non-human beings from "mistreatment, enslavement, torture, death and extinction". In the case of the Great Apes, these are intelligent and emotionally complex creatures. There is no reason to begrudge ethical progress in any sphere which affords respect for God's creation.

In 2002 the Bishops Conference of England and Wales published *The Call of Creation* which reflected on "our communion with the other creatures of the earth". We need to hear far more of this ethos in official proclamation, and positive input whenever the secular world leads the way in animal protection issues.

**John M Gilheany, Roath, Cardiff**

#

**10th August 2008**

**\* Frenzy of fiestas must be stopped \***

FIESTAS are held in numerous countries every year. They are often blessed by the clergy and held in the name of saints. In Catholic villages, from Europe to South America, baying mobs taunt, ridicule and torment defenceless, terrified animals in what are described as 'entertaining spectacles'. The animals endure agonising torture, mutilation, castration and death, which is wildly applauded. The justification is that 'the meat feeds the poor'. Those responsible worship on their knees at Mass, but participate in these repulsive, barbaric practices.

One Spanish priest actually responded with the audacious and flippant remark: "In my country we care more about children than animals." Including Spain, the other pious religious countries that look the other way on this issue are France, Portugal, Brazil, Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Guatemala, Venezuela and Ecuador.

The church bells herald another extravaganza, and so far the Catholic Church has neither acknowledged nor condemned this blood-lust brutality.

**Mr Anthony Ryan**, Wembley, Middlessex

#

**10th August 2008**

**We are stewards of God's creation**

I READ Fr Sean McDonagh's column every week. We need it. I agree with him that when we pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth", it means our earth, today.

Unless we see our interconnectedness with our environment, we will be unable and unwilling to protect it against exploitation. We need to maintain biodiversity as well as other species, but we are God's stewards for all of creation – God's creation. Pope John Paul II called for "an ecological conversion" by the Church but we are still in denial over the harm we are doing. The other Christian denominations seem to understand this better than us.

**Sara Newman**, Weymouth, Dorset

#

**17th August 2008**

**\* Bring back spirit of St Francis \***

MR Anthony Ryan of Middlesex is surely to be heartily commended for his brilliant letter (*Universe*, August 10), denouncing Church apathy to-wards animal abuse, which is so rife in Latin countries. I need to be careful here as I write as a non-Roman cleric! Similar appalling abuse, which is openly condoned by Rome, frequently goes on elsewhere – often in countries which consider themselves the proud fruit of a past reformation.

As a retired cleric of the Scottish Episcopal Church I well remember how disdainful were the looks as I frequently partook of Scrumpy and Guinness, in preference to demure ladies offering their cups of tea in china earthenware — always, of course, topped up with 'the juice of the cow'. Indeed, the latter beverage was the mark of respectability. "Do have a cup of tea, vicar!" they would say, while stout was hardly 'becoming of the cloth' in predominantly proud Presbyterian Scotland.

When I mentioned the true facts behind the intensive factory farmed milk industry, and the appalling cruelty involved, a 'clap happy brother' interjected with words attributed to Baptist evangelist Billy Graham: "How brown cows eat green grass and then produce white milk doesn't bother me brother! I simply say 'alleluya' for the milk and enjoy it to the full!" he enthused. My innovation of animal blessing services was, in most folks' minds, 'not a little eccentric'. "Is he going to bless ants next?" asked one cleric in derision — the same cleric had been blessing tanks during a past decade.

Well, I only know that if all branches of Christendom had travelled the upper line of a humble Franciscan friar rather than the downward line of a haughty 'angelic' doctor, then history would have been remarkably different and the kingdom of God would have arrived. The sordid fractions reminiscent of a recent Ulster could never have occurred and animals would have become our brethren rather than our bacon, black pudding and blood sports.

The appalling fact is that there is much innocent blood upon the hands of those in top Church leadership, and I sense I can still hear Our Good Shepherd reiterating: "You're picking out moral gnats while you're swallowing moral camels whole!" As a consequence, I find the words of Anna Sewell (authoress of *Black Beauty*) most poignant and relevant: "You may talk about your religion as much as you like, but if it does not teach you to be kind and caring towards animals as well as humans, then it is nothing but a sham"

**Rev James Thompson**, North Wales

#

**24th August 2008**

**Animal cruelty is barbarous**

THANKS to Anthony Ryan for exposing the cruelty involved in fiestas (*Universe* letters, August 10). For some years I did not visit Spain because of this. Then I went to live there — in a place where such barbarous events did not take place — but soon bull runs and visiting bull fights were introduced in the holiday season, catering largely for visitors. Now I have discovered Menorca, which has many of the attractions of Spain and where I have met many animal lovers, but have not come across any cruelty.

**Malby Goodman**, Scotland

#

## The Catholic Herald

**14th March 2008**

### **The dangers of activism**

In a letter to the Salesians of Don Bosco to mark their 26th general chapter this month, Pope Benedict XVI expressed an idea that may turn out to have been one of the most significant of his pontificate. He told them that they should seek out a spiritual life rooted in "profound mysticism and a solid asceticism" instead of "activism". There is a message here for every Catholic. We are not all called to profound mysticism. We must cultivate our inner lives assiduously, but in the modern world the gifts of the Holy Spirit descend on the extrovert and the bon viveur, and that is no doubt the way that God intended things to be. We can learn, however, from the Holy Father's naming of "activism" as a less than ideal alternative to the contemplative lifestyle.

Christians are told by Jesus to express their faith in their actions which, at first glance, can seem indistinguishable from secular humanitarianism: feeding the hungry, visiting prisons, tending to the sick. What we often forget is that charities take their name from the greatest of the cardinal virtues named by St Paul: charity. This is not to deny that charitable instincts predated the Judaeo-Christian revelation; they are part of the Creator's design. But they find their full expression in Christ.

That truth is obscured when Christian action is dressed up as activism. Many Catholic organisations are deeply engaged in "campaigns" that – like so much of the work of non-Catholic charities – have become politicised in their rhetoric. Sometimes disproportionate effort is spent on modest, secular aims, such as the diocesan purchase of Fairtrade coffee. The danger with "campaigning" and "solidarity" is that they can encourage smugness, even narcissism. The Pope's message is really very simple: activism can stand in the way of action rooted in love. #

**4th April 2008**

### **Cardinal acts over climate change**

CARDINAL Keith O'Brien has joined Scotland's religious leaders in calling for the Government to act over climate change. He teamed up with Sheilagh Kesting, moderator of the Church of Scotland, and Sheikh Muhammad Ruzwan, a leading imam, to write a letter to Cabinet Secretary, John Swinney. They said 150,000 people are dying every year from climate change-related diseases.

They also urged the Scottish National Party, which controls the Scottish Executive, to support the demands of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, a coalition group of 30 groups, which claims 15 million supporters. Among the groups involved in the new umbrella organisation are Christian Aid, Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund and Islamic Relief.

"We must not turn a blind eye to the suffering of the most vulnerable people who will continue to be those most acutely affected by climate change," they said in the letter. #

**2nd May 2008**

### **Priests and religious march on Parliament**

By Simon Caldwell

ALMOST 300 Catholic priests, monks, nuns and religious sisters have marched on Parliament to demand stronger measures to tackle global warming. The group assembled outside the Houses of Parliament before expressing its concerns to politicians including Hilary Beim; the Secretary of State for the Environment and Rural Affairs. They held up banners bearing the slogans "Kick the Carbon Habit" and "Stop Climate Chaos".

The event was organised partly by Cafod, the overseas development agency of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and the Conference of Religious. It aimed to persuade the Government to agree to amendments to the Climate Change Bill that is passing through Parliament and which will become law later this year. The group wants the carbon emissions reduction target to be increased from at least 60 per cent to at least 80 per cent by 2050. It also wants Britain's share of emissions from aviation and shipping to be included in the reduction.

The lobby included Benedictine Fr Christopher Jamison, the Abbot of Worth Abbey, Sussex. "God made the world for us to care for and he also intended it for it to be some thing to share justly for everybody," he said. "We have two religious duties that we are expressing here today. Firstly, to make sure the world is cared for because it is God's world. "Secondly, the world's poorest are the worst affected by climate change and so in justice we must make sure that climate change does not make the poor even poorer." Fr Jamison added: "It is easier to characterise this as stopping progress but what we are here to do is to encourage our Government to develop new ways and find new technologies so that the world's development can continue and continue fairly."

The event was also attended by Fr Sean McDonagh, a Columban missionary from Tipperary, who has campaigned on environmental issues for about 30 years. Fr McDonagh, the author of the 2006 book *Climate Change and the Challenge to us all*, said that small rises in global temperatures might result in "catastrophic" harm to the planet and that it was important that the Church was at the forefront of the environmental

movement. Besides setting targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the Bill will establish an independent body - the Carbon Committee - to work with the Government to reduce emissions over time and across the British economy.

It will create powers to enforce new emissions-reduction measures and set out new monitoring and reporting arrangements. Cafod argues that the United Nations Development Programme has recognised that the targets in the Bill "were not ambitious enough". About 150,000 people die each year from the effects of climate change, almost all from developing countries, according to the agency. Chris Bain, director of Cafod, said: "Tackling climate change is essential if the Government's good work in fighting poverty is not to be undermined by rising global temperatures which hit the world's poor hardest. "We desperately need to see a strong Bill going through Parliament which shows the Britain is taking tough action on climate change, and gives the government a mandate to speak out at crucial international talks."

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, the president of the English and Welsh bishops' conference, said he was "greatly encouraged" by the event. "We are all called to care for creation, living simply and sustainably, and to work for justice in solidarity with those living in poor countries," he said #

### **13th June 2008 Environmentalists call for enforced population control**

Labour backbencher praises China's one-child policies

by Anna Arco

A LABOUR backbencher has praised China's controversial one-child policy during a debate in Parliament, suggesting that population control should be considered in order to counteract global warming. The remarks by Barry Gardiner came only days after a key Government adviser on the environment attacked the Catholic Church for its "malign" teaching on contraception while arguing that the only way to stop global warming, was to limit the world's population. Jonathon Porritt said he believed the Church was "undermining the future prospects for humankind".

Speaking in the Commons, Mr Gardiner, MP for Brent North, said that population Control was one of three ways to face climate change. He suggested the need to "reduce population - something that politicians in developed countries are very reluctant to discuss but which governments in developing countries have already taken on board". He said: "People are very keen to accuse China, as we have heard in this debate, over their coal-fired power stations. Such people fail to commend the political initiative that has seen 400 million people not being born to create a carbon footprint in the first place. We need to take the issue of population seriously... it should be incorporated into this Bill." Mr Gardiner's comments stunned pro-life activists and human rights campaigners. China's one-child policy has meant that couples who have more than one-child are penalised both financially and socially. Putting the policy into practice has also led to forced abortions and sterilisation.

Lord Alton, a crossbench peer and human rights campaigner, said that Mr Gardiner's remarks were "an endorsement of the one child policy pursued relentlessly by the Communist authorities". He said: "That cruel policy has led to unspeakable violations of human rights and to the barbaric treatment of those who have dared question it. The blind human rights activist Chen Guancheng is still in jail for exposing the forced abortion or sterilisation of 130,000 women in the Shandong Province. "China is the only country in the world where it is illegal to have a brother or a sister - a policy aided and abetted by our own Government who channel taxpayers money to agencies who in turn fund the Chinese Population Association. I am appalled that anyone should suggest that the answer to global warming is to pursue policies like this

Josephine Quintavalle of Comment on Reproductive Ethics said conservation was important and that rich countries must learn to "share resources with those less fortunate" and not rely on "policies which involve coercive population control or discrimination against desperate immigrants". She said that it was "particularly unpalatable" to "admire China as Barry Gardiner days". She said: "This is the country where millions of unborn female babies have been aborted in acts of blatant gender discrimination, in order to further the country's ruthless one-child policy."

John Smeaton, director of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, said that he was appalled by Mr Gardiner's remarks in Parliament and accused him of not caring about the women who were being forcibly sterilised as a result of China's population control policy. "These are well-publicised incidents," said Mr Smeaton. "People in public life are surely aware of them. But politicians and not just Barry Gardiner don't seem to care. Forced abortion was deemed a crime against humanity at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, and yet they happen in the name of population control in China. We should demand our politicians be confronted on these matters."

Mr Gardiner, a father of four, made his remarks less than a week after Mr Porritt attacked the Catholic Church during a speech on population control at the Cheltenham Science Festival. Mr Porritt, who has been involved with Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace and heads the Government's Sustainable Development Commission, argued that the only way to save the Earth was to have fewer children. In a talk at the Science Festival entitled "Too many people?" the Cheltenham-based father of two suggested that a larger investment into "fertility management" could reduce global warming. #

18th July 2008

### Bishop scorns rights proposal for apes

By Anna-Patrice Bitong

A SPANISH bishop has criticised a bill that would extend human rights to apes. Attacking the premise of giving apes rights denied to unborn children, Bishop Jose Munilla Aguirre of Palencia called the proposed law a "radical denial of the concept of a person". Abortion and embryonic stem-cell research are legal in Spain.

"In this logic of irrationality, 100,000 children are sacrificed annually in Spain, while everyone in the Congress of Deputies has mobilised in defence of monkeys," he wrote in a statement titled "From Evolution to Involution: We Return to the Ape." "We freeze human embryos as if they were guinea pigs from a laboratory, while we prohibit experimentation with monkeys," he said.

"Spain has become the first nation in the world to recognise for monkeys three fundamental rights of man: the right to life, right to liberty and the right to not be tortured physically or psychologically."

The environmental commission of Spain's parliament has approved uniting the country with the mission of the international Great Ape Project, an organisation that pushes for the expansion of rights once reserved for humans to chimpanzees, orangutans, bonobos, or pygmy chimpanzees, and gorillas based on their genetic similarity to people.

Supporter Joan Herrera of the Initiative for Catalonia-Greens Party, which introduced the proposal along with the country's governing Socialist Party, has pointed out the "evolutionary and genetic proximity between the human genome and that of the apes, which have a 98 per cent resemblance". However the bill, which sets into motion a ban on experimenting on monkeys in Spain, has angered critics who believe the government should prioritise defending human life.

Meanwhile, the Great Ape Project congratulated the Spanish government for being the first "important parliament" in history to announce its support of the rights of primates. #

25th July 2008

### The rights of apes

From the general secretary of Catholic Concern for Animals

SIR —The Spanish bishop who criticises the extension of some human rights to apes (Report, July 18) is obviously unaware of Cardinal John Heenan's statement in 1970 that "[animals] have very positive rights because they are God's creatures. If we have to speak with absolute accuracy we must say that God has the right to have all his creatures treated with proper respect" Are the rights to life, to liberty and not to be tortured so very extreme? Rights for unborn children are, of course, sacred — but that does not preclude other beings from being protected, surely?

'Yours faithfully, **Deborah Jones**, Bishop's Cleeve, Gloucestershire #

Not published

### The rights of apes

Sir

I found last week's leader scorning the giving of "human" rights to apes disturbing. The term "human rights" is a secular concept, influenced especially by the idea of a social contract conferring rights on those capable of duties, with the potential to exclude unborn children as well as other species.

A far more godly concept is "theos rights" (a term coined by the Revd Professor Andrew Linzey), by which all humans and animals have rights because they belong to God. Thus rights proceed from God's grace, protecting all the weak and helpless.

Far from blurring the distinction between humans and apes, the giving of protective rights to apes enhances our being in God's image, emphasising human ability to make righteous moral judgements. It is when we see, e.g., priests blessing cruel fiestas in Spain that the image of God in us is most in jeopardy.

The Bible says that the righteous care for their animals, but the wicked are cruel to theirs (Proverbs 12, 10); so the new Spanish laws are hardly an attack on the Church. Cardinal Newman, celebrated in your last issue, called cruelty to animals "Satanic", "as if we did not love God". To jealously claim rights for ourselves alone is not Christlike: Philippians 2 teaches that Christ freely emptied himself of his rights.

Unborn babies and animals share innocence and vulnerability. Let us rejoice when protection is given to either, and campaign for the "theos rights" of both.

**Barry Miles** #

Not Published

### The rights of Apes

Dear Editor,

Further to the item "Bishop scorns rights proposal for apes" about whether monkeys should be given rights, I believe that we have a responsibility to stop animals suffering at the hands of humans. Unfortunately most laboratory experiments on animals are done without pain relief. Doctors used to believe that because a baby

couldn't speak & reason, that it couldn't feel pain. We now know this to be a false assumption, as anything with a sensitive nervous system can feel pain.

There are more accurate research methods which don't involve animals such as computer imaging. Stem cells from umbilical cords can be used for research. This is ethical as cords are normally just thrown away after birth. [www.cords4life.org](http://www.cords4life.org) If penicillin had been used on guinea pigs first, we may never have had its benefits because penicillin kills guinea pigs.

The book "Science on Trial - the human cost of animal experiments" by Dr. Robert Sharpe, details all the medical advances which were delayed by animal research giving false results for humans. The toll from medical drugs proves the unreliability of animal tests. One in twenty hospital beds is occupied by people suffering serious side-effects to medical drugs - yet all these were tested on animals first.

I believe that no good comes from subjecting animals to cruelty, as most medical advances came from studies of humans. How can we call ourselves Christians and condone animal cruelty. Imagine if God had been created you as that small creature about to be experimented on!

A. Wills.

#

## Rochester Link

**September 2008**

**\* What's the cost of your breakfast egg? \***

A.RUMPUS initiated by chefs Jamie Oliver and Hugh FerFenley-Whittingstall will reverberate in churches throughout the land on the weekend of 4 & 5 October. In the Cathedral on Saturday at 3.15 pm, Bishop Michael will address a subject which some may consider trivial but others regard as timely - the suffering of that most humble of creatures, the chicken reared to produce cheap meat or eggs.

**Bishop Richard Llewellyn writes:**

This Ecumenical Service for Animal Welfare will be followed next day by services throughout the land as parishes celebrate Animal Welfare Sunday with a special emphasis, this year, on the plight of poultry. I am among these who strongly believe is timely for the Church to become involved in this issue following the high-impact campaign against cruel intensive poultry systems so ably presented by the two chefs. Trivial? Not when you consider the scale of suffering involved. Nine out of ten farm animals are meat chickens, and 95% of these (more than 800 million a year) are reared in inhumane conditions. Consider the suffering as meat birds painfully outgrow their own skeletons, and laying hens are imprisoned for life in the notorious battery cage.

But people need cheap meat. This argument, frequently used, is at odds with the current epidemic of obesity that is causing the government and doctors much concern. A glance down any High Street confirms that our major nutritional problems stem more from "too much" than "too little".

As food historian Felipe Fernandez-Armesto wrote in The Times recently: "The era of cheap eating has been a disaster. People in the rich world have eaten too much food, fattening themselves into obesity and sickness". When war-time rationing drove us to depend much more on vegetables, we ate less meat and other animal produce in a week than most of us now eat in a day - and the nation was considerably healthier!

The Church of England has long given a nod in the direction of animal welfare with pet-blessing services an annual feature of many churches. Some years ago, as Bishop of Dover, I was due to preach at such a service when my attention was drawn to calves in their hundreds being exported from Dover docks to the continent for fattening in crates banned in this country. I went to see for myself and later told the congregation at the pet service what I had seen. The result: front page fame (or notoriety!) and more than 400 letters - the vast majority saying: "Thank goodness the Church has spoken out against cruel factory farming systems at last!".

The Church needs to keep on speaking out against intensive systems which frustrate the God-given needs of the creatures we eat, and subject many of them to misery from birth to death. And as individual Christians we all need to take personal responsibility for stewardship of creation by the supporting the more humane free-range rearing systems - even if this means eating less (and becoming fitter!).

I very much doubt that practising Christians are in the habit of kicking their dogs. But I suspect that some of us are guilty of "buying into cruelty" failing to give sufficient thought to the animals which end up on our plates. The Bible tells us that God does not forget a single sparrow. Surely we can't imagine he overlooks fifty thousand suffering birds packed into a stinking shed, or the pathetic creatures in a battery cage? So do join us at Rochester Cathedral on Saturday 4 October and join with us in praise to God for the wonders of the animal kingdom, and our prayers for all creatures who needlessly suffer. Bishop Richard, former Bishop of Dover and Bishop in Lambeth, is Chairman of the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals [[www.aswa.org.uk](http://www.aswa.org.uk)] #

# The Catholic Times

4th May 2008

\* Heart of the Matter \*

While experts believe that high food prices will be permanent, Catholic Bishops are calling for help for the poor. **Barbara Fraser** reports on an escalating crisis facing people across the globe.

**'Help the poor become better off'**

As protests over rising food costs spread around the globe, experts warn that high prices are here to stay, and Catholic bishops are calling for governments to take emergency measures to keep their poorest citizens from going hungry. Already this year, demonstrations linked to spiraling food prices have struck more than a dozen countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Protests forced Haitian Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis out of office last month, and demonstrators have been killed in Cameroon, Peru and Mozambique.

The price increases are fuelled by a variety of factors that "are all coming together at once", said Lisa Kuennen of Catholic Relief Services, the US bishops' international relief and development agency. Drought last year in Australia and Canada pushed wheat prices up, while flooding destroyed crops in various countries, she said. High oil prices have increased the price of petroleum-based fertilisers and increased transportation costs.

Another factor is the rising standard of living in China and India, which has led to increased demand for luxury foods such as meat and milk. Because it takes seven or eight pounds of grain to produce a pound of meat, increased meat consumption drives up demand for grain and, therefore, the price. In China, per-capita milk consumption quadrupled between 1990 and 2000, while poultry consumption more than doubled and the consumption of fish nearly doubled. In India, the consumption of meat, milk and fish also has increased. Price increases hit poor countries — and their poorest citizens — hardest.

In Guatemala, the price of tortillas, a staple food, has risen 30 per cent in the past few months. Poor Mexicans, who eat nearly a pound of tortillas a day per person, have seen the price double in the past two years. Workers earning the mini-mum wage of about £2 a day now spend as much as one-third of their earnings on tortillas for the family. "There has been an uncontrollable rise in the price of tortillas and other basic elements," Mexican Bishop Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel of San Cristobal de Las Casas said last year. "Society and the Church have to support social development programmes so that the poor can be self-sufficient and not have to depend eternally on government and private help."

Inflation last year in Ethiopia was 20 per cent, and Church workers report more people, especially women, children and the elderly, living on the streets and knocking on church doors for help, said Kuennen. In Burkina Faso, prices of staple foods rose between 14 per cent and 67 per cent, she said, and families now spend as much as 75 per cent of their income on food. Unlike past years, this year these price increases are appearing at harvest time, when products are most abundant and prices should be low, Kuennen said.

High prices can be good news for farmers who have a crop surplus to sell, but for those who must purchase food to supplement a subsistence harvest — and for people in urban areas who do not grow their own food higher food prices mean there is less money to spend on other essentials, such as health care or children's education. The scope of the food crisis puts an extra strain on aid organisations, Kuennen said. In the past, food shortages were more local and fore-seeable, making it easier for humanitarian groups to respond. The current crisis is striking all around the world, however, and high oil prices make it more expensive to ship food to those who need it most.

The UN World Food Programme had budgeted £1.5 billion to aid some 70 million people this year. In March, however, officials estimated that they needed another £250 million to meet that target, and by April 1 that figure had grown to £385 million partly because of increased shipping costs. Britain has pledged an additional £4 million in assistance to the World Food Programme, and the US government has decided to release \$200 million of its emergency food aid reserve. Aid workers say it is important to allocate money to rebuild the reserve as soon as possible. Kuennen said that US food aid dropped to its lowest level ever last year and is expected to be below the legally mandated minimum of 2.5 million tons this year. Between 2001 and 2006, the US government donated an average of 4.4 million tons of food a year to needy countries.

Food assistance is only a stopgap measure, she said, but such aid, along with programmes to provide cash or vouchers to poor families, is a crucial response to the immediate crisis. "People need to be kept from starving and from rioting," she said. After violent protests in Haiti in early April, the country's Catholic bishops urged the government to implement both emergency and long-term policies to tackle hunger. In a statement the bishops condemned the violence that began with protests in the southern city of Les Cayes and left at least five people dead. Although "the right to demonstrate is sacred", the statement said, "this does not authorise anyone to take lives or attack property belonging to others".

In their statement, the bishops warned that peaceful demonstrations should not be infiltrated by "agitators and interested manipulators". Many Haitian analysts had suggested that the demonstrations over high food prices had been hijacked by politicians trying to turn the unrest to their political advantage. If oil prices remain high and the

demand for staple foods continues to grow, countries will need long-term policies to deal with the effects of food-price increases and quell discontent.

Some countries have begun providing food subsidies, have lowered import tariffs on food or have halted exports of grains and vegetable oils. John Hoddinott, a senior research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, said those measures are misguided. Subsidies are costly and difficult to eliminate, he said, while lower tariffs push prices down and discourage farmers from planting more crops, because they cannot be sure of earning enough to cover their costs.

Many countries have limited exports of certain staples. China has blocked rice and maize exports, while India has stopped exporting milk powder and Bolivia has banned the export of vegetable oil to its South American neighbours. Those bans exacerbate shortages, Hoddinott said, driving prices up further. Long-term policies must include increased investment in agriculture and development and more consistent international trade policies, he said. "We really need to help poor people become better off," Hoddinott said. "That is the long-term solution?" #

**4th May 2008**

## **Climate change debate still hotting up**

By Agneta Sutton

THE United Nations week-long Climate Change Talks in Bangkok ended on April 4. The meeting closed on a relatively optimistic note. In a statement to the press, Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, reported that a timetable had been set for the negotiating process preparing the way for an international climate change agreement in Copenhagen at the end of 2009.

He said that "not only do we have the certainty that critical issues will be addressed this year, we now have the bite-sized chunks which will allow us to negotiate in an effective manner. The train to Copenhagen has left the station".

It is indeed important that such an agreement is reached, since the Kyoto Protocol, which was signed in 1997, but only came into force in 2004, expires in 2012. For undoubtedly it will take years for enough countries to ratify the new agreement. And it will not come into force until a sufficient number of countries have done so. The Kyoto Protocol only came into force once countries responsible for 55 per cent of industrial nations' emissions had ratified it. And this requirement was not satisfied until the Protocol had been ratified by Russia in 2004.

As for the bit-sized chunks that de Boer spoke about, the next major climate change meeting before Copenhagen will be held in Bonn in June this year. At this meeting delegates will discuss ways of generating finance to reduce emissions and adapt to the inevitable changes of climate change. They will also explore ways of scaling up the development and transfer of low-emissions technologies to developing countries.

Later in August there will be another meeting in Ghana with focus on deforestation in developing countries. This is not only because forests help to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, but also because deforestation is thought to be responsible for some 20 per cent of global carbon emissions.

At the fourth meeting this year, which will take place in Poznan, in Poland, next December, the main subject of the discussions will be targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Needless to say, the ultimate objective of the hoped-for Copenhagen treaty is an agreement about how to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and avoid run-away concentrations and ecological disaster.

While Mr de Boer's closing statement at the Bangkok meeting sounded optimistic, there are, however, many problems ahead. Part of the problem is that neither the US nor Australia has ratified the Kyoto Protocol. Instead they have formed another climate change partnership with China, India, Japan and South Korea. This is the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, which was established in 2005. If all states in the world were working under the same umbrella organisation it would make it easier to come to a new and meaningful international agreement in Copenhagen.

Another problem is that China and India, the two major industrialising countries, may be loath to sign any new agreement, unless rich countries, among them notably the US, are willing to reign in their carbon emissions more forcefully than they have hitherto done. And if India and China failed to sign the Copenhagen agreement, the agreement would mean very little. This is partly because these two states are becoming major carbon emissions polluters. In fact, China is now the world's biggest carbon polluter. In addition, if these two states failed to sign the Copenhagen agreement many other developing countries would follow their example.

In an interview with *The Guardian* (April 14), Rajendra Pachauri, the head of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, expressed a less than optimistic opinion about reaching an international agreement in Copenhagen next year. Noting that there is a fair amount of suspicion on the part of many developing countries, he said: "In several developing countries you get the feeling – in fact, people state it very clearly – that these guys [in rich countries] are going to shove the whole burden on to our shoulders."

To be sure there is a certain degree of resentment on the part of developing countries that are being asked to go easy on carbon emissions. The reason is obvious. The developed countries have for decades and decades polluted the skies while building up their industries. Yet now that developing countries are trying to build up their industries they are told to go easy.

However, Dr Pachauri said there was still time for the developed countries to convince India and China to sign a deal in Copenhagen. But it would require a number of serious measures in the next few months. There can be little doubt that he was pointing his finger at the US in particular. For he singled out Europe for praise and called on other rich countries to follow the European lead and set ambitious carbon reduction targets for the next ten years.

He made special mention of Germany, which has invested massively in renewable energy. He also said that the UK had done quite well in its efforts to reduce emissions. Perhaps he meant that it could have even done better. It might be noted that when emissions from shipping and aviation are included, the UK's carbon dioxide emissions are actually higher now than they were in 1990. And that is not good news. #

**18th May 2008**

## **Silent tsunami that sweeps the planet**

### **Talking Point**

Global food shortages are plunging millions of people into poverty, as **Geoff Baker** reports

IT has been likened to "a silent tsunami which knows no borders sweeping the world". That is how the head of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) recently summed up the global food shortages. The crisis has plunged an extra 100 million people into poverty and triggered riots in Haiti, Cameroon, Indonesia and Egypt and is deemed a dangerous threat to stability. Some global food prices have nearly doubled in the past three years, provoking riots and other protests in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The WFP's biggest concern is for the people living on 50 pence a day who have nothing to fall back on.

The food shortage is due to a lethal combination of high fuel costs, bad weather in key food producing countries, the increase in land allocated to bio-fuels, and a surge in demand – much of it from the rising middle classes of China and India. The problem in the poorest nations are getting less food or no food. The recrimination campaign has started. Whose fault is it?

President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal has dismissed the UN's food agency as a "waste of money" and called for it to be scrapped. He said the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) was itself largely to blame for the price rises. His comments came as bakers in Nigeria began a week-long national strike in protest at the cost of flour and sugar. A UNESCO report called for urgent changes to the way food is produced. It recommended better safeguards to protect resources and more sustainable farming practices, such as producing food locally.

More natural and ecological farming techniques should be used, it says. In the meantime, the third world is in turmoil over the costs of rice, wheat and soya. All this is very true. Yet there is another element which is not going to help the current food shortage and which would further enable people in need of food to get it when they need it. The phenomenon is as old as time. It is corruption.

In 2006 the Holy See, through the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace issued a document which said corruption is a phenomenon that is growing nationally and internationally, impacting all social sectors and not limited by politics, geography or economic level, seeking to counter its effects on the human person. While it is difficult to calculate the impact of corruption, "the costs are borne by the citizens" of all nations.

It said: "Corruption is a phenomenon that is not limited by politics or geography. It exists in rich countries and in poor countries. Corruption crosses all social sectors: It cannot be attributed only to those who work in the economic sector or only to public officials; nor is civil society exempt. Corruption is a phenomenon that involves both individual states and international organisations." Yes, all the issues mentioned so far need to be addressed. But corruption needs to be tackled as well. The issue of widespread corruption needs to be addressed as its "price ... is paid by using monies intended for the legitimate use of society"

Corruption, the Vatican council added, is connected to drug trafficking, money laundering, illegal arm trading and other organized criminal activity. It takes away food from the mouths of the poor. Beyond the economic impact of corruption are its effects on distorting political institutions and stunting the growth of the human person. If corruption causes serious harm from a material point of view and places a costly burden on economic growth, still more harmful are its effects on immaterial goods, closely connected to the qualitative and human dimension of life in society. Corruption hinders the promotion of the person and makes societies less just and less open. Giving food or subsidies to developing nations is not enough. They must be helped when there are voids at the level of legislation and when they do not yet have adequate legal institutions for the fight against corruption.

The Church's social doctrine makes use of all its fundamental guiding principles, which it puts forth as indications of personal and collective behaviour, placing them on the front-line in the battle against corruption. These principles include the dignity of the human person, the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity and the preferential option for the poor.

The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace explained: "Corruption stands in radical contrast to all these principles. It exploits the human person, disdainfully using men and women for selfish interests. It represents an obstacle for achieving the common good, because it is based on individualistic criteria of selfish cynicism and illicit special interests." The fight against corruption requires the demonstration to individuals and national

governments that moral action provides "important social advantages". Such a perspective "tells us," the council said, "to think of the fight against corruption as a value, and also as a need; that corruption is an evil, and that it also involves a great price; that rejecting corruption is a good, and also an advantage; that abandoning corrupt practices can lead to development and well-being; that behaviour marked by honesty is to be encouraged and behaviour marked by dishonesty is to be punished."

What ever the Western world does to fight the food shortage, it needs to address the issue of corruption in developing countries. By so doing it will be killing a parasite that takes away food and resources from the mouths of the poorest of the poor. #

25th May 2008

## The price to pay for saving the planet

By Agneta Sutton

THE rising cost of fuel will have wide-ranging implications for industry, for transport and so for world economies. It also will affect those of us who are dependent on our cars. It will especially affect people who live in rural areas. There is no doubt that there is cause for concern. But to look on the bright side, the cloud that hangs over us has a silver lining – perhaps even a golden one. It will make private individuals and companies and even countries more determined to conserve energy.

Money is the prime factor. To be cynical, it has more of a motivating force than 'green morality' or ecological concerns. And in the present situation savings can be made by using less energy, by changing to different kind of energy supply and by changing means of transport. It can also be made by minimising wasteful loss of energy due to poor housing insulation.

The Financial Times of April 18 devoted several pages to the issue of 'Business and the Environment'. Noting that the list of businesses going "green" lengthens by the day, it was argued that going green not only enhances their image in the eyes of consumers and environmentalists but – and perhaps more importantly – it also makes good business sense, not least in the short-term. Quoting, James Mahoney, Director of Global Public Policy at the Bank of America, it was observed that: "with the increased price of energy, businesses are now finding they reach pay-back more quickly on investment in efficiency".

So what is meant by efficiency? Among other things it means using less packaging and switching from road to rail and water as means of transport. Less packaging means less energy spent on transport, which means less money spent on transport. It was reported that by using less packaging on 300 ranges of toys Wal-Mart saved \$3.5 million in transport costs in one year. Less packaging also means less waste. Sometimes when you buy a packet of biscuits – or anything else for that matter – the actual product constitutes but a small proportion of the bulk of physical matter that you acquire. That switching to cheaper means of transport makes good business sense with today's oil prices is indisputable.

And, as noted by Robert Wright, "waterborne-transport can often shift goods in larger blocks with less fuel per tonne of cargo moved than land-borne alternatives". This is because transport by water requires less fuel than transport by road. Transport by road is also more expensive than transport by rail. And the reason for this is, as explained by Robert Wright is that "the low friction of steel wheels on steel rails mean trains consume far less energy per tonne moved than road transport".

In the UK there are now trains running from the English midlands to Scotland carrying consumer goods that formerly were transported by road. And in continental Europe, rivers and canals are increasingly used for transport. According to David Cross, sales and marketing manager of EWS, the UK's largest rail freight operator, in the past 12-15 months we have witnessed a real change of attitude. People are now showing a serious interest in environmentally-friendly rail transport. And no doubt this is – at least partly – because transport by rail is not only environmentally friendlier than transport by road but a cheaper. Indeed, it might also be faster –and so in that sense too be more efficient.

It might be added that both individual households and companies can save themselves and the world energy by switching off lights when they are not needed and by turning off computers when they are not being used. Some people say they don't like the light of energy-saving light bulbs. Perhaps they have not tried to get used to them? If they tried, they might find that it is not very difficult, especially if they receive smaller electricity bills.

To be sure many consumers are actually making real efforts not to waste energy and so to go green. But at times they find the price too high. Ecover, the small company that makes ecological cleaning products, notably washing-up liquids, would probably increase its sales if their prices were lower. If their washing-up liquid is placed next to Fairy Liquid in the supermarket, it is very tempting for the consumer to go for the latter, given the price difference. To be sure the consumer is willing to buy ecological products, but often only if the price is right.

To give an example, by halving the price of energy-saving light bulbs, Tesco has greatly increased their sales of such light bulbs it sells. Today's consumer is well informed and being green is both politically and morally correct. By saving energy is one thing, buying green products is another. If the shops make it easy to go green, shoppers will go green. And in many cases lowering the price of green products could make sense inasmuch as it might increase custom. #

**8th June 2008****In Brief**

DERBY: Catholic Concern for Animals presented an award to the women's prison Foston Hall for an outstanding wildlife sanctuary project. A spokesperson for the organisation said: "good works and inspiring people need to be celebrated, for the sake of the whole of God's wonderful creation." #

**? June 2008****Talking Point**

As the world's most powerful leaders met in Japan, Alan Alton offered some timely advice on what should be done in a bid to tackle the global food shortage

**\* G8 leaders must meet challenge posed by food crisis \***

BAN KI-MOON, secretary general of the UN, says that if the present global food shortage crisis is not adequately addressed, one consequence could be "social unrest on an unprecedented scale". His predecessor, Kofi Annan recently remarked that the world food crisis threatens to destroy years of economic progress, and may push millions back into abject poverty. But good could come out of this crisis if it is seized as an opportunity to reform global agriculture and longer term productivity in Africa and elsewhere.

Every single day 25,000 people die of hunger or hunger-related causes. The food riots and reports from dispirited parts of the globe — children dying of hunger in Ethiopia — where the poorest can now only buy 40 per cent of the food they could buy two years ago, and where 4.6 million people are urgently in need of food — famine in North Korea, the collapse of the government in Haiti — these are all harbingers of worse to come. **Many other fragile countries will reap the whirlwind of our failure to address a crisis that the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) has called a silent tsunami affecting every continent, plunging more than 100 million people into hunger, and plunging more countries into violence and instability.**

Spiralling high food prices are creating the biggest challenge that WFP has faced in its 45 year history, with millions of people who were not in the urgent hunger category six months ago now listed as such. Maize and rice have almost doubled in price over the past year. In the UK higher food prices are causing us all to tighten our belts but in vast swathes of the world — where even before the crisis around 3.5 children die annually of malnutrition — there are no belts to tighten. The UK Government currently spends less than 1p per malnourished child per day. The devastating impact of the world food crisis on malnutrition will add to what was described in a series of papers published in January by 'The Lancet' as a "fragmented and dysfunctional" international response to malnutrition.

Save The Children, citing The World Bank, confirms that more than 100 million people will be pushed into poverty as a result of food price rises; and that 854 million people were already hungry before prices started to rise, including 178 million children under five who were stunted. The cost of food accounts for half the expenditure of a poor family and, as prices rocket out of control, those families simply cannot keep up. An average family in Bangladesh that has £2.50p a day will spend £1-50p on food. A 50 per cent rise in the cost of basic food requires a further 75p — leaving them with just 25p for all other expenditure.

This shocking situation has been compounded by rising oil prices that have made farming more expensive and by natural disasters such as Cyclone Nargis in Burma, the Sichuan earthquake in China, flooding and droughts and by crop failures in countries like Ethiopia. It has been accentuated further by the rapid industrialisation of vast parts of the world — especially India and China. That in turn has led to demands for more and better food. The acute nature of the crisis in some parts of the world has already forced WFP to reallocate some of its resources — it has suspended, for instance, its school feeding programme to 450,000 Cambodian children — because it does not have funds to meet all the challenges. WFP representatives in 78 countries around the world are facing similar dilemmas.

In the short term the world food crisis will lead to sudden unexpected starvation and therefore to death. In the long term, development programmes will collapse and nutrition losses will damage children for a whole lifetime. The consequences of the 1990s famine in North Korea, for instance can best be seen in the contrasting stature of North and South Koreans. The average adolescent in North Korea is 18 centimetres shorter than his counterpart in the south. Stunted growth and malnutrition damage bodies and educational attainment. Failure to take the right decisions on agriculture, biofuel production, subsidies, tariffs and trade are they key factors in precipitating this crisis — not, the old bogey of population; a point to which I will return.

The president of the World Bank, Robert Zoellick, has challenged the world community to find the £370 million needed to avert the immediate crisis: "The world can afford this. The poor and hungry cannot," he has said. The World Trade Organisation can take a lead in this and it needs to be persuaded to abandon grossly distorted trade policies that have, for instance, forced Japan to import rice while it produces large surpluses (770,000 tons of unwanted and unneeded rice were imported last year alone). And what else might we do in the longer term? Food output in many impoverished parts of the world could be doubled or tripled by creating a special fund to support the world's poorest farmers — helping them obtain seeds, fertilisers and irrigation. Drought resistant crops need to be developed and more research undertaken into ways of bolstering food production.

As well as a "green revolution" we must persuade European and American governments not to use corn to make ethanol, or to displace food crops by oil seed for use as biodiesel. This is a classic example of the law of unintended consequences. **How many people could be fed by the food used to fill the tank of a four-wheel drive Mitsubishi Shogun?** The US is spending \$7 billion annually in subsidies for maize-based bio fuels. The diversion of this maize from the international markets accounts for a third of the price increase but it also says something about our priorities that we would rather fill a petrol tank than the stomach of a starving child, rather use food to feed our cars than hungry families. **The moral bankruptcy of feeding cars at the expense of malnourished people should be self-evident.** There is also increasing evidence that biofuels have limited CO2 benefit and through the clearance of rainforests and other pristine areas like peat bogs, will increase CO2 emissions.

Instead of subsidising bio fuels we should encourage the World Bank to get on with its plans to provide social safety nets – particularly insurance for poor farmers hit by natural disasters such as drought. This would tide them over until better times come and allow them to stay on the land. Too many feel forced to migrate to the squalor of urban shanty towns. But the World Bank also needs to atone for the too rapid liberalisation of markets in the developing world. The consequence has been the initial dumping of food by Europe and the US and the consequential reliance of poor nations on cheap imports attended by the abandonment of farming by their own people.

"Back to the Land" is a call that needs to go out all over the developing world. But whenever we debate the availability of food to feed the starving two other lines of argument loom large; population control and the need to develop genetically modified crops. Both lines of argument need to be treated with great caution. Long before Thomas Malthus published his 'Essay on the Principle of Population', and the later ideology of eugenics was promoted by Marie Stopes and the rest, there was always a tendency to attack population as the problem rather than poverty. In the second century AD Roman lawyer and Church writer Tertullian wrote: "Our numbers are burdensome to the world, which can hardly support us." Two hundred years later, Greek-born priest St Jerome wrote: "The world is already full, and the population too large for the soil."

More recently, in 1968, Paul Ehrlich, in his book 'The Population Bomb' argued that the number of human beings on Earth would soon outstrip the food available. Ehrlich assumes that the population is going to rise exponentially, but that the available resources, in particular food, are already at their limits.

The solution, he said, lay in "population control", policies such as the encouragement of sterilisation, contraception and abortion and, in extremis, the cutting off even of humanitarian aid to countries who refused to take such measures. If we did not do this he said it would result in mass starvation not just to the developing world, but in America, too. He predicted that America would only be able to support a population of 30 million people by the end of the 20th century – about ten per cent of the actual figure in 2000. He also said, in 1969: "I would take even money that England will not exist in the year 2000." Happily, as with most doomsayers, time has not proven kind to Ehrlich's predictions.

Yet his fatalist analysis retains much influence, despite its flawed reasoning and predictions. Ironically, today's low fertility rates in Europe, North America, Japan and Australia are now having severe negative consequences for these countries but when people's standard of living improves, population falls naturally.

The other danger of an over exaggerate emphasis on population control is that it leads to coercion. In China the one child policy has had shocking consequences, such as the distortion of the gender balance with 117 males being born for every 100 females.

While we should strive to increase food production levels, there is evidence to suggest that food production levels are currently more than adequate at present, if only the food was fairly distributed. As the American Institute for Food and Development Policy asserts: "Abundance, not scarcity, best describes the world's food supply." Using data from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations it has calculated that there is enough wheat, rice and other grains are produced to provide every human being with 3,200 calories a day – not including many other commonly eaten foods, such as vegetables, beans, nuts, root crops, fruits, grass-fed meats, and fish. **As Ghandi put it: "Enough for our needs but not for our greeds."**

Along with the argument that we must target population sits the other canard that genetically modified foods will somehow feed the world. Instead of investing heavily in developing crops that can tolerate heat, floods and drought, GM has been presented as a cure all. GM can undermine food self sufficiency, pollute water and land, cause significant soil erosion by depleting the soil of its carbon content and exacerbate climate change. It is the single largest source of nitrous emissions — a powerful greenhouse gas — and GM crops destroy biodiversity. **The catastrophic effect of herbicide resistant GM crops on ecological diversity is bad enough, but crucially, it does little to boost yields either. We need crops that can increase yields not crops resistant to ever more powerful weed killers.**

At their summit in Japan the G8 leaders have the chance to avert this crisis. To do that in the short term they will have to increase resources; but there must also be significant investment in research and development, science and technology to enhance yields and land use; increased efforts to ensure an end to distorted trade policies; and a repudiation of quick fix solutions such as bio fuels. #

15th June 2008

## Vatican Letter - John Thavis

## Vatican Focus on global food crisis

AS world leaders were meeting in Rome to work out a response to the global food crisis, the Vatican weighed in on two levels – morality and macroeconomics. Pope Benedict XVI laid out the moral principles in a message to the World Food Security Summit, saying that hunger and malnutrition were unacceptable in a world that has sufficient levels of agricultural production and resources.

The Pope said a chief cause of hunger was lack of solidarity with others, and he emphasised that protecting the right to life means helping to feed the hungry. The Pope also spoke of structural changes needed in the global agricultural economy, but he didn't get into particulars.

Those finer points, however, were examined in unusual detail in a little-noticed briefing paper produced by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. The document offered the Vatican's take on the mechanisms behind the food crisis headlines. On one of the most hotly debated issues today, it came down squarely against developing biofuels from food crops at a time of global hunger.

The document made several important points:

- The current food crisis began in 2005, it said, and is extraordinary because the price increases have affected almost all agricultural products, have hit many countries and have endured over a long stretch of time;

- The text identified circumstantial causes of the food crisis: bad weather in many cereal-producing countries, the rise in energy prices that make production and transportation more costly, and speculation by commodity investors who have bought low and sold high. Some exporting countries, including Brazil, China and India, have begun stockpiling food and keeping it off the market, apprehensive that they will not be able to satisfy domestic needs. That practice has also helped drive up prices, the document said;

- It also examined the structural causes of the crisis, and here things get a bit more complicated. The paper pointed to one important shift in developing countries: a lower demand for cereals and a higher demand for protein-rich foods. **That has led to more land used to produce animal feed, and less for foods used in direct human consumption.** It said long-standing subsidies to agricultural producers in richer countries have artificially kept down the international price of food products and thus discouraged farming in poorer countries. The result has been large-scale abandonment of local agriculture and increasing urbanisation;

- The effects of the food crisis are not equal: The weakest suffer the most, especially children and the urban poor;

- The document called for reconsideration of the rush to biofuel development, at least during the current crisis. Governments are called to protect the right to nourishment, and it is "unthinkable" for them to diminish the quantity of food products in favour of nonessential energy needs, it said. **Moreover, it said, the "hijacking" of agricultural land for production of biofuel crops was being subsidised by governments,** which represents an interference with the correct functioning of the global food market;

- Emergency food aid is a necessary short-term measure, it said. But such aid, if continued for long periods of time, can actually aggravate the root problems of the food crisis by weakening local agricultural markets and the food autonomy of beneficiary countries;

- On the other hand, the current boom in food prices could turn out to be an opportunity for agricultural growth in poorer countries, as long as farmers have the essentials: land, seed, fertiliser, water and access to markets.

While the food crisis seems to have crept up on much of the world, the Vatican has been warning about the hunger problem and market imbalances for years. In a 1998 document on land reform, for example, the justice and peace council said the trend toward large landholding was strangling the future of local farming in developing countries. When introducing their comments on the food crisis, the pope and Vatican offices consistently quote the words of Christ: "For I was hungry and you gave me food." Today, the Vatican is saying that basic task has assumed new dimensions that make it more complex, but far from impossible. #

29th June 2008

## Vatican Letter - John Thavis

## \* Are you taking the green tablets? \*

WHENEVER there's mention of a new Ten Commandments at the Vatican, journalists start salivating. So the buzz was high when a new Decalogue for the Environment was promised in early June. As it turns out, though, these Ten Commandments were not headline material. Instead of a list of 'Thou shalt nots', a Vatican official presented a set of ten basic principles to keep in mind on environmental issues. Meanwhile, an Italian theologian and spiritual adviser to Italy's national agricultural federation came up with his own Ten Commandments, focusing on what he called "ecological sins".

As the environment continues to evolve as a main theme of Pope Benedict XVI's pontificate, here is a look at these two takes on offenses against environmental ethics – one nuanced, the other more pithy.

Bishop Giampaolo Crepaldi, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, offered ten principles drawn from the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Here is an abbreviated version:

1 The human being, created in God's image, is placed above all other earthly creatures, which must be used and cared for in a responsible way;

2 Nature must not be reduced to a utilitarian object of manipulation, nor absolutised or placed above human dignity;

3 Ecological responsibility involves the entire planet in a common duty to respect a collective good, for present and future generations;

4 In dealing with environmental problems, ethics and human dignity should come before technology;

5 Nature is not a sacred or divine reality, removed from human intervention. Thus, human intervention that modifies some characteristics of living things is not wrong, as long as it respects their place in the ecosystem;

6 The politics of development must be co-ordinated with the politics of ecology, and every environmental cost in development projects must be weighed carefully;

7 Ending global poverty is related to the environmental question, remembering that the goods of the earth must be shared equitably;

8 The right to a safe and clean environment needs to be protected through international co-operation and accords;

9 Environmental protection requires a change in styles of life that reflect moderation and self-control, on a personal and social level. That means moving away from the logic of consumerism;

10 Environmental issues also require a spiritual response and a greater awareness that the created world is a gift of God.

Mgr Carlo Rocchetta, who works as a sort of chaplain to Italian farming organisations, took a more traditional approach and used the Ten Commandments schema – though his adaptation would never fit on stone tablets:

**1 I am the Lord your God: You shall not cause situations of danger or death in the order of nature, especially if they can become permanent and uncontrollable;**

**2 You shall not commit violence to the created world and its integrity: There exists an "ecological sin" that offends me, just as a personal or social sin offends me;**

**3 Remember to respect the unity of the life-system and the interdependence that exists among beings: The future of humanity is at stake. Seek a lifestyle that is moderate, just and respectful of nature and the common good;**

**4 Honour the variety of living creatures, flora and fauna: It is a gift and a richness for all; do not impoverish or destroy it. Appreciate biodiversity; value and pro-mote it;**

5 You shall not kill economic democracy, social justice and solidarity in the name of economic and financial powers that cancel the freedom, creativity and initiative of smaller entrepreneurs;

6 You shall not use the genetic patrimony and the knowledge of the human genome for profit or gain: All that is written in creation is shared and should serve the good of all humanity;

7 You shall not steal or create new forms of poverty and exploitation of the weakest, using a perverse economic system in which the poor make the rich richer;

**8 You shall not bear false witness to consumers, lying about products, generating food insecurity or even disease. Respect life in all its forms and work to produce safe foods;**

9 You shall not desire agriculture without farmers, anonymous and unconnected to the land. Value the task of "custodian" and "cultivator" that I entrusted to man from the beginning;

**10 You shall not destroy traditional regional products or those of quality, the tastes and flavours of the earth; do not contaminate healthy seeds and livestock with cultures and fodder that may not be safe. Intervene in nature to improve it, not to threaten or do violence to its delicate balance.**

Whichever version of the "environmental commandments" are used, it's clear that following them closely would challenge the current system of agricultural economics and personal consumption. #

**3rd August 2008**

**Vatican Letter - Cindy Wooden**

**\* Green papacy's concern is concrete \***

VISITING Australia in July gave Pope Benedict XVI an opportunity to develop further his creation morality, which he first explained in the northern Italian Alps a year ago. While Pope John Paul II was the outdoorsman, Pope Benedict's three-year pontificate is already seen as the green papacy. Accepting donations of solar panels and a reforestation project to offset the Vatican's carbon foot-print, the 81-year-old Pope has shown his concern for the environment is concrete.

But his July 12-21 trip to Australia also gave him an opportunity to demonstrate that his concern is theologically based, part of a broad moral code, and is perhaps the best way to convince young people that there is such a thing as natural law – that some actions are naturally always right or wrong. Meeting priests in the Alps last year, **the Pope suggested that affirming young people's sensitivity to environmental concerns was the first step in showing them that they really believe God created all things and that God's plan for creation must be respected.**

The next step, he said last year, was to explain that "we must not only care for the earth, but we must respect one another". "Only with absolute respect for this creature of God, this image of God which is man, only with respect for living together on this earth can we move forward," the Pope told the priests. **For Pope Benedict, the obligation to safeguard the environment flows from recognising that God has a plan for creation as a whole and for all its components: air, water, mountains, forests, flora, fauna and – especially – human beings.**

In Sydney for World Youth Day, the Pope had an opportunity to explain to Catholic young people how it all fits together. **"God's creation is good and it is one," he said at the July 17 welcoming ceremony. "The concerns for nonviolence, sustainable development, justice and peace and care for our environment are of vital importance for humanity," he argued.** "They cannot, however, be understood apart from a profound reflection upon the innate dignity of every human life from conception to natural death: a dignity conferred by God himself."

**The earth and all it holds was created to sustain human life, he explained, but neglect, greed and shortsightedness have led to the poisoning of air, water and soil and the destruction of the forests.** The Pope said respect for creation means protecting and perfecting the person just as much as it means safeguarding the world's natural resources. **But in the human environment, as in the rest of nature, there exists "a poison which threatens to corrode what is good, reshape who we are and distort the purpose for which we have been created."**

Alcohol and drug abuse, violence, sexual degradation, abortion and other attacks on human life are all signs of how people ignore their own dignity or the dignity of others as the crown of God's creation, the Pope argued. And, he told the young people, relativism — thinking that there do not exist any absolute truths — is one of the clearest signs of a waning recognition that God is the creator of all things and all people.

Under the guise of being "neutral, impartial and inclusive of everyone," relativism actually claims God's place and denies that there is any such thing as natural order, natural purpose and natural goodness, he said.

**The world is fragile, the Holy Father told them, and harm done in one area affects another. "We have become more and more aware of our need for humility before the delicate complexity of God's world," he added.** The Pope told the youths that while the thought of his flight to Australia "was somewhat daunting," it allowed him to fly over seas and oceans, deserts and forests. Barely perceptible from the sky, he said, were the millions of people created in God's image and likeness. "At the heart of the marvel of creation are you and I, the human family, crowned with glory and honour," he told them.

With all the natural beauty of the planet, he said, "perhaps reluctantly we come to acknowledge that there are also scars which mark the surface of our earth, erosion, deforestation, the squandering of the world's mineral and ocean resources in order to fuel an insatiable consumption". And, he added, the same is true of people, who have achieved so much in so many ways, yet in other ways are destroying themselves or others. "Some of you excel in studies, sport, music or dance and drama, others of you have a keen sense of social justice and ethics, and many of you take up service and voluntary work," he said.

The Pope's message to the young people was that, like the stars and the seas, the flowers and the cattle, "your very existence has been willed by God, blessed and given a purpose". #

10th August 2008

\* New ways neglect idea of stewardship \*

A SEDUCTIVE pagan ecophilosophy – deep ecology – has a wide hearing today. This is not least in New Age circles and among people with a leaning towards so-called alternative lifestyles and values. As Christians, we may share many of the values espoused by deep ecology but must beware of its deism or atheism. Christians and deep ecologies have, in many respects, a common attitude towards the natural world, but there is an abyss between their understandings of the place of humans in creation.

As Godless lifestyle philosophy, deep ecology has no time for the Christian understanding of stewardship and the human role in the divine drama played out in time and history. The very term 'deep ecology' was introduced by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in the early 1970s. Naess, a romantic and a nature-lover, as well as a philosopher of language, was arguing for human self-identification with nature. **For, feeling at one with the world and other creatures, the human being filled with respect for other life-forms and for natural beauty would recognise that by harming other creatures or the environment, he would harm himself.**

Many Christians might sympathise with this way of seeing things. And Christians would share Naess' understanding of the intrinsic value of non-human life, as well as human life, and his appreciation of the richness and diversity of life. Likewise they might sympathise with his preference for a lifestyle of simplicity and his view that quality of life is not to be equated with standard of living. And his call for a substantial reorientation of our whole civilisation has a ring of similarity to the evangelical call for a transformation of values, that is to Christ's call to the human heart in the Sermon on the Mount.

**Christians might also have some sympathy with Naess' view that animals and plants have a right to live,** while agreeing with the view of St Thomas view that "it is lawful both to take life from plants for the use

of animals, and from animals for the use of men" and that this is in keeping with the commandment of God Himself: for it is written (Gn 1:29-30): "Behold I have given you every herb... and all the trees... to be your meat, and to all beasts of the earth" and again (Gn 9:3): "Everything that moveth and liveth shall be meat to you" (ST, I, II, q. 64). With Noah humans were given a special dispensation to eat meat – in this less than perfect world.

But then even deep ecologists, or at least Naess himself, would agree that we should give preference to our nearest and dearest which could mean killing animals for food, but not for pleasure as is often done in hunting. Both Christians and deep ecologists would recognise that we must seek to avoid causing pain and suffering. Thus, even Christians might accept talk of animal rights as a short-hand for saying that we have no right to kill or inflict pain on animals as we please. **Andrew Linzey, an Anglican theologian, argues that animals have 'theos rights' in the sense that their rights are the complements to our obligations or responsibilities to them before God, as their – and our – giver of life.**

Moreover, deep ecologists as well as Christians recognise that humans are endowed with special abilities and so special responsibilities. Yet their perceptions of our place in the world and in relation to other creatures differ. Deep ecology has nothing to say about human likeness to God and so no appreciation of the concept of stewardship as one implying responsibility before God. Nor do they recognise the Pauline view of mankind as elevated above other creatures, since we are the creatures with whom God united Himself in the Incarnation and became man in order to "unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10) and "to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in Heaven" (Col. 1:19-20).

Both in the Old Testament and in the New, it is made clear that the beasts living with man on earth do through us enter into a special relationship with God. **Thus on a Christian understanding, it is our role and responsibility as covenanted stewards of creation to include the animals in our care for ourselves--especially as the whole of creation is said to be "crying out for salvation" (cf. Rom. 8:18-25). Seen as having a special role in the order of creation, we human are also seen as being of special value in that order, on a Christian understanding.** Not so, according to deep ecology. Deep ecology is calling for an egalitarian attitude towards other creatures. To be sure, Naess sees the concept of stewardship as one of human hubris and arrogance inasmuch as it implies a human superiority compared with the rest of creation. According to a Christian understanding, it is precisely in view of our superiority that we should humbly before God care for his creation. #

**10th August 2008**

### **Why pontiff should stop wearing his fur clothes**

ALTHOUGH Pope Benedict XVI does not wear fur-trimmed accessories in the summer, an Italian animal rights group has launched a petition asking the Pope to stop wearing animal fur at anytime.

Lorenzo Croce, president of the Italian Association for the Defence of Animals and the Environment, posted his petition online on July 21. By last weekend he had collected almost 3,000 signatures. The petition says the ermine-trimmed accessories Pope Benedict has worn— the red, fur-trimmed camauro cap he wore briefly in 2005 and the fur-trimmed capes he regularly wears in the winter and early spring – "have nothing to do with sacred vestments". "With respect for life in all its forms and to remember that animals also are creatures of God," the petition asks the Pope to act.

It also says animals "have a right to live" and that they feel fear and pain "when they are killed to satisfy human greed in all its forms". Those signing the online petition are able to leave comments. Croce said he would send his petition and the signatures to the Vatican in September.

Of course this is not the first time the pontiff's garments have caused controversy. In April 2007, after a well-known Italian fur-coat designer announced she would present the Pope with a new cape made of ermine pelts, the Italian Anti-Vivisection League publicly asked the Pope to stop wearing fur. But in June the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano published an article saying that ornate papal vestments are meant to symbolise the spiritual transformation of the person wearing the clothes, not his love of fashion.

One Italian cardinal was not impressed with the animal rights campaigners' argument, believing there are more important issues globally. He dismissed their concerns saying bluntly: "There are human beings who merit more urgent assistance than no one is taking care of. And if we eat animals, we can wear them."

**However, the UK-based animal rights group Catholic Concern for Animals believes the Pope should set a good example by refusing to wear fur, citing the need to abandon cruelty of killing animals.** Whatever the rights and wrongs of the donning of such garments, perhaps the Pope might be advised to stop wearing the camauro cap ...After all, it does closely resemble a tea-cosy! #

# Church Times

29th February 2008

**\* UN warns' of new food-price crisis \***

by Bill Bowder

THE UN World Food Programme (WFP) is to hold an emergency meeting in Rome today, as rising food prices across the world threaten to create a new constituency of millions of city-dwellers who are unable to afford basic foodstuffs. The Organisation for Economic and Co-operative Development (OECD) has warned that food prices could rise by between one fifth and one half over the next ten years.

The sudden leap in the worldwide price of grain and other basic foodstuffs could mean that millions of hitherto relatively affluent people in cities would not be able to afford food, Greg Barrow, a London-based spokesman for the WFP, said on Tuesday.

He said the key factors behind the price-shift were:

- **demand for meat from India and China, as their economies grow. Feeding livestock diverts grain stocks from markets;**
- high oil prices, which have pushed up the costs of oil-based fertilisers and the cost of transport;
- arable land that has been switched to biofuel production, and so is lost for food supplies;
- weather extremes caused by global warming, which have damaged farming in the developed countries that supplied the global market.

The WFP was already struggling to feed its core constituency of 73 million people in 78 countries this year, Mr Barrow said. But those people, who are affected by natural or man-made disasters, could expand "quite dramatically". "We are looking at 30 countries around the world where city-dwellers are at risk. This is a new constituency." The WFP says that it needs US\$3.4 billion this year, \$0.5 billion more than it had previously thought'

David Cameron, the leader of the Conservative Party, told members of the National Farmers Union on Monday: "Analysts say that politicians should start to rank the issue of food security alongside energy security and even national security. . . We face the potential prospect that the abundance of food that we all take for granted will come to a crashing end."

The head of humanitarian and emergency affairs for World Vision UK, Ian Gray, said on Wednesday: "Where we are around the world, we are seeing 30-per-cent, 40-per-cent, even 50-per-cent increases in food prices... People will struggle to meet their food needs." #

4th April 2008

**\* The good sheperd \***

*When Graeme Sims rescued a dog, his life and vocation changed.*

*Pat Ashworth hears his story*

THE Revd Graeme Sims describes the journey from prosperity to poverty as like losing altitude in an uncontrollable way: collision with the ground is a certainty. "All the victim can do is hope that it doesn't come too soon and that it isn't too messy when it does;" he says in his newly published book, '**The Dog Whisperer**'.

The sudden collapse of his successful advertising business 20 years ago left him with nothing. At his lowest point, aged 50 and reduced to selling even the furniture, his rescue of an abandoned dog from an on-coming car set him on the path to a new career as a shepherd and dog-trainer - and, a decade later, to ordination.

"I could speculate for ever (and have) about how she had managed to get to the same place as me at the same moment. She needed me and I needed her, and something or someone had arranged our coming together he writes. Having first worked in publishing, where he also learned to use his artistic skills, he had enjoyed "the more demanding, sophisticated, and better-paid world of advertising", and had risen from studio manager to creative director, and then to heading his own company. The crash, therefore, was all the harder, and he says: "I had been a blue-eyed boy for maybe 20 years, and deep down believed I couldn't possibly fail. If you win and get every idea right, you begin to think you're charmed - which, of course, I wasn't. I was as daft as the next man."

The odds of finding the sick and underfed Annie that day are something he never ceases to marvel at, he says. It was "a gentle kick from God to say, 'Wake up". He used a dog whisperer's instinct rather than a manual to train Annie and restore her confidence. Dog whispering treats dogs as partners and friends, not servants. Interpreting a dog's body language and habits can help man and dog communicate and understand each other, Mr Sims believes, and the book — subtitled How to train your dog using its own language - has the simple aim of teaching people to train their dogs well.

Annie "took to the training like a duck to a very attractive millpond". he records. Months later, when Mr Sims and his wife had retreated to Devon, on the grounds that beautiful scenery was a free gift in their situation, Annie's unique education proved to have given her the knack of herding sheep, and Graeme found

himself in demand as a shepherd, after a neighbouring farmer's flock escaped and surged past his house "like an uncontrollable woolly juggernaut".

Acquiring more sheepdogs, he found he could control a large number together by using commands in a different language for each one, together with different whistles and body-language signs. In demand for demonstrations at sheepdog trials, and later as a full-time demonstrator at the Milky Way adventure park, he loved the showmanship of it all. "I noticed that the more outrageous you are, the more the crowds like it. But you still have to make sure everything you say is true: you must never get so showy that what you're doing is an act rather than the real thing. It was always the real thing."

His way of treating the dogs was considered wholly unconventional at the start. "When I began to train my dogs in this way, traditional dog-trainers thought I was quite potty. They laughed openly and said, 'You'll never get anywhere like that: "Their dogs were servants, and offering a dog an option seemed daft to them. They say you can't do it, because they're frightened of trying it: they have to be the master. That's nonsense. There are moments when you do have to be the pack boss, but, like a good general, you should get on your horse and go out in front, and not be hawing on a line 25 miles behind and saying what should be done." Shepherds love their dogs; farmers tend to regard their working dogs as a replaceable tool, he observes.

The book is mischievously illustrated with cartoon dogs in every kind of pose and situation - most poignantly; the "dog in an iron mask", muzzle firmly strapped on, eyes frightened. The step-by-step advice to dog-owners is simple, straightforward, and heartening. Dogs are what they eat; dogs need routines; dogs are much brighter than you think; shouting is human barking; love is a two-way thing; peaceful coexistence is easy to achieve. Some hackles still rise, he finds: "I get critics saying, 'The man's mad.' But it's worked for me. It's worked beautifully for years and years and years."

There is an absence of sentimentality, though he does quote the "lovely Sunday-school story" that has God naming all the animals and leaving the dog till last because it was to be man's best friend. God tells the dog: "Your name shall be God spelt backwards." Mr Sims's attitude to dogs is very much conditioned and informed by his Christian faith, he acknowledges. Ten years after the crash, he offered himself for ordination as "a thank you to God for putting Annie in my way". He ministered as an NSM for ten years before retiring last year.

The book deals with the death of beloved dogs. People do ask a lot about whether dogs have souls, he confirms, and in his book he reflects that the Bible "appears to allow only humans a soul". It's pretty open-ended, though, he suggests. And, while he notes in the book that clergy friends reading it will point out his theological error, he gives an unashamed picture of heaven where, from the gate of a cob cottage on the edge of the moor, out will rush a host of dogs and cats, geese, ducks, and sheep to meet him. "Then I shall hear laughter from inside the cottage itself, as if a wonderful tea party is going on, and all those I have loved and lost will be there."

He has, he says, "a theology close to Zen": "I'd like, when I die, to understand things a bit better than I do." Children at primary school assemblies often ask him whether their rabbit, hamster, guinea pig, dog, or cat will go to heaven. He responds, "I answer, 'Yes,' reasoning that, if God is love, then love draws no barriers. Did the donkey that carried Jesus go to heaven? Of course it did!"

Now living in a rural valley in South Wales - "a return to my Celtic roots" - he has 15 dogs, a flock of sheep, and a number of elderly ducks. His favourite spot, to which he brings a group of dogs each evening, "in a sort of fairness rota", is an outcrop of rock high above the valley, where the dogs lean in to him, their bodies touching his legs. It's heaven"; he suggests, "- and if heaven's like that, by golly, it will be good." The book concludes: "Peace is dog-shaped. Contentment wears a black-and-white furry suit."

Out with the dogs that morning in the orchards and fields, Mr Sims reflects - without vanity, he hopes - "I hope God treats me and loves me like I love these dogs. I've watched them for signs of illness and discomfort, and every morning I ask them, are you happy?" He laughs. "They don't exactly say to me, 'Yes, I am, thank you; but I can tell from their body language how we're progressing, and it's a kind of warming feeling, giving a bit of strength to us. I'd be barmy if I said Jesus had a dog. But I'm sure that the deep meaning of it all is that we do love animals. Dominion over the earth is meant to be an intelligent dominion, I'm sure, not a forceful dominion."

*The Dog Whisperer is published by Headline Publishing Group (£14.99; 978-0-7553-1698-4).* #

**25th April 2008**

**\* Is wheat now the new gold? \***

*Food shortages and biofuels are part of a crucial moral debate, argues Anthony Russell*

FOOD has become a national obsession. No newspaper is complete without advice on nutrition, obesity, the glories of little-known local producers, and the sins of the supermarkets. **No mention is made of the fact that, within the foreseeable future, the world will run out of food.** Last year, the wheat price increased by 100 per cent; and rice, the staple food of three billion people, has risen by nearly 50 per cent on the international grain exchanges. Rationing was lifted gradually after the Second World War, though it did not end completely until 1954. Since then, or so it has seemed to the European consumer, there has been an abundance of food, increasing variety, and diminishing cost in real terms.

The average British household spends 13 per cent of its weekly income on food, while our grand-parents spent 30 per cent. In a 40-year period, we have moved from food controls to the problems of over-supply in the 1980s, and now face the reality of an increasing concern for food security. There is only 65 days' worth of wheat in store across the world. Even those who get no closer to farming than the shelves of a super-market will be aware of recent significant price rises. Since 2002, the price of bread has risen by as much as 202 per cent, eggs by 72 per cent, and milk by 20 per cent. Much of the rise has been in the past year, when average shopping basket food costs rose by 25 per cent, as a consequence of the 100-per-cent increase in the cost of wheat. We may now be entering a period when wheat is the new gold.

THIS IS NOT another comment on the collapse of the global ecosystem, but an attempt to draw attention to what some people have expected for a number of years. Such changes will come with huge social and ethical consequences. The World Bank has calculated that, as a consequence of population increase (currently 6.3 billion, rising to near ten billion in less than 50 years) and increasing incomes, leading to greater demand, the world food supply will need to double by 2050.

The new Government Scientific Adviser made this the subject of his first speech at the Sustainable Development UK conference last month. **Some experts are suggesting that we face a choice between the widespread adoption of a vegetarian diet,** or the increasing use of GM crops and transgenic animal production.

At the centre of this problem lies the competition between forms of land use. Land is used for urban, industrial, and transport needs, and therefore is not available for agriculture, even though this is often the flattest and most fertile land. For the remaining agricultural land, there is a growing global conflict between options for use — for food, fuel, or the environment.

The needs of the first two are such that the EU policy of "set-aside" (taking land out of production) has been ended in the UK, and is unlikely to be reintroduced, thus obliterating what many regard as substantial biodiversity and environmental benefits. The RSPB, with other environmental organisations, has protested, suggesting that other land be designated for environmental purposes.

The EU decision to zero-rate set-aside may be regarded as the first manifestation in England of the worldwide conflict between alter-native land uses. The land previously fallowed can now be brought back into production, but there remains the question what type of production. I have recently returned from Germany, where I stood by what is believed to be the largest maize mountain in the world. When mixed with slurry, this vast quantity of maize is fed into a digestion system, which produces gas to drive turbines to produce electricity for the German grid. Here was a direct conflict between land use for food, and for energy.

The emergence of a more numerous and prosperous middle class in India and China, who demand a diet based on protein rather than starch — the move from the rice bowl to the fast-food counter — has greatly increased world food demand. It has also graphically demonstrated the precariousness of the present situation.

**Statistically, in Britain, every person eats the equivalent of 14 chickens per year. If the Chinese population ate one chicken per head per year, there would not be enough grain in the world to feed those chickens.**

**Traditionally, we have fed half the world's wheat to livestock, 80 per cent of the world's maize, and most of the world's barley, apart from that used for brewing.** That situation has dramatically changed in recent years. Perhaps the most significant of all agricultural statistics are the grain-meat conversion rates: **it takes 9 kg of grain to produce 1 kg of beef; 5 kg to produce 1 kg of pig meat; and 2.5 kg to produce 1 kg of chicken. The world's livestock are not the only consumers of grain, however: markets now face fierce competition from the emerging biofuel industry**

IN THE past ten years, there has been a transformation in the prospects of biofuel. At the beginning of this period, oil-based fuels were relatively cheap (in the past five years they have trebled in price). Biofuels were technically possible, and had been produced for many years in Brazil and Germany, but were commercially unrealistic. Today for both strategic and environmental reasons, this situation has changed completely.

Not long ago, biofuels were the obvious answer to the energy shortage and the need for fuels that generated less pollution. Using crops for fuel that had themselves absorbed carbon dioxide in the growing process reduced both the dependency on fossil fuels and the emissions that resulted from their use. Between 2000 and 2005, world-wide production of ethanol (the most popular of the first-generation biofuels) doubled, and production of biodiesel quadrupled. **Yet filling the tank of a Range Rover with biofuel produced from grain uses the equivalent of the grain required to feed a family of four for three months.** Commentators are now suggesting that the rush to biofuels, which initially seemed like a win-win situation, is demonstrating both environmental and economic problems.

The Royal Society has questioned the carbon saving of biofuels, and has suggested that future targets be firmly linked to cuts in greenhouse-gas emissions. Covering the countryside with arable crops, and particularly oilseed rape, has attracted the opposition of environmental groups: monocropping restricts biodiversity; so there are fewer wild flowers, fewer insects, and fewer small mammals. Despite this, the Government's target, which came into force last week, of 2.5 per cent biofuel in all petrol and diesel, and ten per cent by 2020, is

unlikely to be met from domestic production. The United States is anxious to export biodiesel for transport needs, as only four per cent of US cars are diesel, compared with 50 per cent of European cars.

Between July 2005 and November 2006, the ground was broken for one new ethanol plant in the US every nine days.. As a consequence, 20 per cent of last year's US harvest was for fuel, not for food. The fact that the relatively cheap American maize was not available in Mexico for tortillas has resulted in food riots, and condemnation from the Mexican bishops. In Britain, it is likely that an increasing amount of biofuel will be imported, and this is sourced from palm oil, grown principally in South-East Asia and Brazil, the production of which is responsible for much environmental damage as the rain forest is cleared.

The United Nations spokesman on famine, Jean Ziegler, in October called the biodiesel boom "**a crime against humanity**". The 30 million tonnes of extra grain going to ethanol this year amounts to half of the fall in the world's overall grain stock. **He said that this was a direct trade-off between filling the stomachs of the poor or the diesel tanks of the wealthy.** The future lies in the development of a second generation of specific fuel crops from non-food sources, such as timber, elephant grass, straw, and other materials.

IF GRAIN is the new gold, water might become the new oil. The depreciation of the world's fresh water supplies is perhaps one of the most significant threats to global hunger and political stability. It has been said that, in the future, inter-national conflicts may well be about water and access to water supplies.

**Some of the world's longest rivers, such as the Nile, the Indus, and the Colorado, no longer reach the sea for a significant part of the year. It takes 1000 litres of water to produce one kilo of wheat, and 11,000 litres to produce one beef-burger.**

As spokesmen for the developing countries have recently suggested, when we import agricultural crops, we are effectively importing water from overseas. One third of the world's cut flowers come from Kenya, of which four-fifths are roses. One quarter of these are sold in Britain, along with aeroplane-loads of packaged salad and green beans. A concentration on cash crops for exports reduces both the land and water available for domestic food crops. The agricultural use of water is less of an issue in Britain: only four per cent of crops are irrigated, but they make up 20 per cent of the total crop value. Any decline in the ability of farmers to irrigate would have a massive impact on the farming and food economy, and on the 50,000 jobs dependent on them in the eastern region alone.

For generations, the farming community has found itself on the margins of British life, but the questions with which it is now engaged are at the heart of the contemporary moral and ethical debate, which many will be considering this Rogationtide. The prospect of serious food shortages, not just in the traditional areas where these have been experienced, but in other parts of the world, will intensify the debate about resource management, and the way in which land and water are used.

*Dr Anthony Russell is Bishop of Ely.*

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## **9th May 2008 Managing bats — but are they better-treated than congregations?**

**From the Revd Martin Snellgrove**

Sir, — You report (News, 25 April) on Bats in Churches: A management guide. It appears that bats are a protected species because they are endangered. May I suggest that they are not the only group under threat.

Small congregations in churches infested by bats have a claim to be included, because the effort of keeping their buildings clean from the effects of the bats can prove one pressure too many. In a saner world, the people for whom a building is primarily intended should have priority over any other species.

MARTIN SNELLGROVE

The Rectory, Kiln Lane, Hope Flintshire LL12 9PH

**From the Revd Dr Michael Perry**

Sir, — I welcome Natural England's new bat guide. Bats can be a problem, but are also an opportunity. Let's celebrate them with colourful displays of the species found in our churches, and summer bat watches. That way we engage with the wider community, and they in turn engage with God's creation and the Church. We will also recruit more willing helpers, should there be any mess.

MICHAEL PERRY

The Rectory, Englands Lane, Queen Camel, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 7NN

#

**13th June 2008**

**\* Creation month gets a push from church leaders \***

by Bill Bowder

**THE presidents of Churches Together in England have called on Christians in England to dedicate their worship each September as "Time for God's Creation".** The Archbishop of Canterbury, one of the four presidents, said that placing environmental concerns at the heart of Christian worship for a fixed time each year "demonstrates our shared commitment" to a sustainable world.

Another of the presidents, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, said that the month, which would end on St Francis's Day, 4 October, was "a sobering reminder of our obligation to respect and care for our world".

"I have always been struck by the witness of St Francis; for he helps us to see that the beauty and goodness of creation are a reflection of God's own beauty and goodness."

The Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomeos I, has also called on Christians and non-Christians alike to rally to protect the environment. He marked World Environment Day last week with a statement that called on all "to contemplate the incomprehensible dimensions of the environmental crisis". The "catastrophe" had been caused by transgression of the divine command to protect creation, he said. "We experience the results of this neglectful and avaricious behaviour today, as weak-willed spectators of the repercussions of catastrophic climactic changes.

"We observe the pollution of fresh and ocean waters, over fishing, the loss of biodiversity, the desertification of soil, the catastrophes occurring in forests from deadly fires, and many more expressions of this unprecedented environmental crisis? **The moment had come to stop thinking that people could take what they wanted from the world.** People of all nations and faiths must now combine together to help renew the natural ecosystem. "Each of us from our own position must make every effort to confront the environmental crisis;" he said.

The general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Revd Samuel Kobia, said in a statement to mark the High-Level Conference on World Food Security held in Rome, 3-5 June: "While climate change is one factor behind the global food crisis, the WCC views the primary cause of the current crisis as inappropriate human actions, which have induced climate change and sky-rocketing food prices." #

**20th June 2008**

**\* The Lord God made them all \***

Claire Foster reads the unfashionable hero of animal rights  
Creatures of the same God: Explorations in animal theology Andrew Linzey  
Winchester University Press £32 (978- 1 -906 1 13-00- 1 )

THE TONE of the book is set immediately by the opening sentence: "They're only animals — for heaven's sake" Linzey's deep and lasting sense of the intrinsic importance of animals under God has been met, throughout his professional career, with a mixture of scorn, mirth, or (where he is taken seriously) disagreement; and I think this experience has had its effect.

Linzey's writing reminds me of much environmental polemic I have seen within church circles. **Those who propose environmental concern have looked in vain for it to be taken seriously by the people of God, in liturgy, in sacraments, in theology, attitude, and behaviour.** Those who are accustomed to being ignored can take on a tone of voice that puts people off even more, because it makes them feel guilty. In trying to get the Church of England to take environmental issues seriously, I knew that possibly the most important thing I had to do was to find the right tone of voice in which to communicate.

Linzey's book should be read — don't be put-off by the tone: It is full of passion, intelligence, useful material, and thought-provoking ideas. It moved me to tears on more than one occasion. It covers the way in which different religions have approached the issues of animal suffering; animal rights; points at which ecological theology and animal theology conflict; animals and vegetarianism in early Chinese Christianity (a fascinating and surprising insight into early practices); and animal liturgy.

**I share Linzey's sense of the intrinsic value of animals. Like him, I believe that their value does not come from their usefulness to humanity. They — like all creation— are lovely, just as they are, because they are.**

As Linzey observes, if we were to value animals only in relation to ourselves we would be proposing an anthropocentric, not a theocentric, cosmology. And while we have, in the priestly creation story of Genesis 1, some biblical mandate for seeing ourselves as stewards of creation, "in charge" under God, it should be noted that, in the Yahwist account of creation in Genesis 2, humanity is formed from the dust of the earth in exactly the same way as the creatures are. The Hebrew of Genesis 2.7 and 2.19 is identical — and is never translated as the same.

Linzey suggests that much of the Bible was written (and, I would add, translated, also) at a time when animals were seen as instrumental; but he argues that if we look more deeply, particularly at apocryphal stories of Christ, there is much to suggest otherwise. Robert Murray's book 'The Cosmic Covenant', on which Linzey draws, has contributed considerably to a robust, biblical account of the intrinsic value of creatures.

Linzey has championed an unfashionable cause all his life, staying true to what he believes, and arguing passionately that it should be better understood in Christian circles. He has not been afraid to speak out, and has not courted popularity. For this reason, he is a hero, and we should listen to what he has to say.

*Claire Foster is Consultant to the Heroes Project, a lay canon of St Paul's Cathedral, and Senior Adviser to St Paul's Institute. The book is available from Winchester University Press at [www.winchester.ac.uk](http://www.winchester.ac.uk), for i32, which includes p. & p.* #

## Church of England Newspaper

4th April 2008

### Christians must be Green

**CHRISTIANS must be Green, according to a prominent diocesan bishop. For followers of Christ, environmental concern is "not an option," said the Rt Rev Nicholas Reade, Bishop of Blackburn. The traditionalist church leader made the declaration as he launched in his diocese a "Green Year" - a drive to encourage his 230 Lancashire parishes to translate the Christian faith into environmental action.**

The Blackburn scheme seeks to develop into an entire year the similar "Green Lent" project launched nationally earlier this year by the Archbishops of York and Canterbury. Bishop Reade said: "I would like to think of our 'Green Year' as a time when individuals and parish communities decide to give something up — preferably permanently - so that God's creation can 'happen' more easily, as we become more at ease and less confrontational with the creation God has loaned into our care."

**The 61-year-old bishop declared: "Environmental concern is not an option among Christians. What God created was 'very good', and what human greed and selfishness has desecrated demands from all Christians a response of active restoration."** The world was, he said, under threat. "Climate change has moved from theoretical possibility to frightening enactment." A key phrase was "tip-ping point"- a point of no return, when environmental factors would appear "beyond redemption"- and he used that theological term advisedly, he said. #

20th June 2008

### Christians urged to switch their electricity supplier

By Matt Cresswell

A LEADING authority on climate change has called on Christians to change their electricity supplier. Speaking to The Church of England Newspaper, Sir John Houghton said it would make an enormous difference to the future of the planet. Speaking after the launch of Tear-fund's latest My Global Impact environmental scheme Sir John Houghton said: "The Christian church is the biggest NGO in the world. If Christians can get together on something they can really make a very big difference."

He added: "It just takes one telephone call to move your' electricity consumption from producing carbon dioxide to electricity that doesn't produce carbon dioxide. And that's a big contribution." He recommended the supplier Good Energy, which is recommended by Tear-fund. "Good Energy guarantees that all the electricity they send down the wire to you comes from non-fossil fuel sources. If everyone did that, or if a large proportion of the population did that, it would force the electricity supplier to buy more renewable energy and that would change the energy very substantially."

Tearfund's online My Global Impact initiative enables people to calculate their own personal carbon footprint, to pledge to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions and also to pay money towards development projects world-wide. "In the industrialised North we have become wealthy by burning coal, oil, and gas that is causing climate change. By reducing our emissions and sharing this wealth poor communities being hit by climate change can benefit," adds Sir John. "There is tremendous potential for us to share what we have with those who have so little... Through this scheme, we will be able to help poor communities cope with the effects of climate change and develop using sustainable energy".

Sir John was the Co-chair of the Scientific Assessment Working Group of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and former head of the Met Office. He is a recognised expert on Climate change and gives talks around the world. He is also critical of attempts to play down climate change. He is very critical of last year's Channel Four documentary 'The Great Global Warming Swindle' which presented arguments which de-bunked global warming. He added: "There are people around who deliberately and because of their own personal agendas put around false information."

*Readers can carry out the My Global Impact test for themselves at: [www.tearfund.org](http://www.tearfund.org) #*

20th June 2008

### \* Why GM foods can't solve the world's food crisis \*

Paul Richardson (The key to the food crisis?', June 13) continues to misrepresent the views of aid agencies like Christian Aid, and the true state of knowledge on genetically modified (GM) crops. We have already explained our real views on trade policy, but this new attack centres on GM and contains important errors of fact. The consensus view is that there is no evidence of a development benefit from GM.

Mr Richardson writes that' rather than "siding with left-wing critics who worry less about hunger than about the benefits of GM technology going to rich farmers, aid agencies would do better to help small farmers take advantage of new technology". The article argues that "Christian Aid should be... trying to over-come popular prejudice against GM technology instead of giving in to it"

The implication - that Christian Aid might be driven by ideology rather than genuine compassion for the poor and marginalised - is deeply offensive. The policy thrust that GM can solve world hunger and so we should devote our scarce resources here - is simply wrong.

Bishop Richardson has perhaps not seen the recent International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) report, backed by more than 60 countries, the World Bank and most UN bodies. The UK welcomed the report, to which it had contributed over half a million pounds of funding. This comprehensive study of agriculture in developing countries, carried out over five years by global experts, found that GM as currently available could do little to help. "Assessment of the technology lags behind its development, information is anecdotal and contradictory, and uncertainty about possible benefits and damage is unavoidable," the report says.

The lead author, Prof Robert Watson (who is also chief scientist at the UK's Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), made clear the position: "The short answer to whether transgenic crops can feed the world is 'no'." Further research is needed before the door is closed on all GM possibilities, but there is nothing to justify the GM companies' hype of GM as a solution to the food crisis. This probably explains why they walked out of the IAASTD process after initially being enthusiastic funders.

Bishop Richardson explains that he wrote "first column on GM food for The Church of England Newspaper six years' ago". There was no evidence of a development benefit to GM crops then. Now, despite a great deal more research having been carried out in the mean time, there is no evidence of a development benefit to GM crops. Instead, there is a consensus that current GM possibilities have little to offer.

Christian Aid welcomes research like the IAASTD report into agricultural improvements that offer benefits for the specific environmental and economic conditions in different developing countries. But should we or the churches support this, instead of combating hunger directly instead of struggling to change the structures that keep poor men and women hungry and marginalised?

We must be guided by compassion, and not by ideology but by evidence about where the benefits of using our scarce resources can be greatest for the poor. This means accepting the consensus that GM has little to offer development, and working instead on those factors - like imposed trade liberalization - that have a direct causal impact on the food crisis. Perhaps, on reflection, Bishop Richardson may agree.

Alex Cobham is Policy Manager at Christian Aid

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**26TH June 2008**

### **Urban Gardening**

at Urbis, Manchester, until September 7

A series of imaginative temporary exhibitions has redeemed Urbis, the museum of city living, from a risk of becoming a bit of a white elephant. Three summer exhibitions cover the work of Manchester-born fashion designer Matthew Williamson, the art of Manga, and Urban Gardening, on how to "green" our urban spaces.

Our church had already done a Hope 08 makeover of three unloved plastic planters in a local street, but this exhibition is full of bright ideas to bring greenery into unpromising urban settings. From living walls to grass roofs (even on your garden shed) there are ways and means to bring life to buildings, and the work of several architects is featured for their innovations and ideas.

"Your window right — your tree duty" was the motto of Austrian artist Friedensreich Hundertwasser, to whom a building with regular-shaped windows was part of the problem. The apartment block he designed in Vienna, Hundertwasser

House, has trees growing out of windows from the inside. Pictures of this capture the imagination, and that's before you see his bizarre Waldspirale (the spiral wood) building in Darmstadt.

Amazing ideas like this from around the world vie for attention with basic green-fingers techniques to brighten any terrace house back yard or city apartment Juliet balcony ("urban chic for urbanites"). The global food and oil crises are translated into a film showing Cuba's of-necessity self-sufficiency community solutions (and Britons are now supposedly growing more of their own food than during dig-for-victory in WW2).

Practical tips abound for how to grow your own herbs in yoghurt pots on the kitchen window ledge, and make plant pots out of your old newspapers. There are activities for kids, and even the Bishop of Liverpool gets a name check for the Faiths4Change initiative in the North West.

Steve Parish

[www.urbis.org.uk](http://www.urbis.org.uk)

[www.faiths4change.org.uk](http://www.faiths4change.org.uk)

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**1st August 2008**

### **\* Church must take the lead on environment, says Bishop \***

The Lambeth Conference must exercise moral leadership on the issue of the environment and global warming, the chairman of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, the Rt. Rev. George Browning of Canberra said last week. **"The church has only itself to blame for giving the impression that it is in the business of saving souls only," Bishop Browning said. The environment is "what we are about," he told reporters on July 26.**

The bishop's remarks came after plenary sessions on the environment at the 14th Lambeth Conference on July 25. **Stewardship of creation was not a "new religion" but a Biblical imperative, "an old religion" that draws upon the creation accounts of Genesis and the prologue of the Gospel of John, he said.** In their small group or indaba sessions, a number of bishops have named the environment as one of their most pressing concerns. Bishop Browning noted that from desertification in the Sudan to the melting of the permafrost in the Arctic, issues surrounding the health of the planet were at the forefront of discussions.

In an evening plenary address to the bishops, Christopher Rapley director of the London Science Museum urged the church to take the lead in combatting environmental degradation. Science alone could not solve the "ecological crisis," he argued. "We are looking for moral leadership," Dr. Rapley said. "As a scientist I am looking in your direction."

Liverpool Bishop James Jones told the plenary his views on the church's responsibility to the environment had been sparked by discussion with young people in his diocese. They caused him to "rethink my own attitude to the earth". **It sent me back to the Bible and the teachings of Jesus and to the discovery of the Biblical and moral imperative of caring for the earth."**

The Bishop of Lebombo Denis Sengulane reported the effects of climate change were already being experienced in his diocese in southern Mozambique. The country had long relied upon cashew nuts as a source of export income and support for peasant farmers. The cycle of life in many villages revolved around the annual cashew harvest, with migrant workers returning from the cities and schools closing to bring in the harvest. "Today, cashew nuts have gone mad with trees dropping their nuts out of season", Bishop Sengulane said. **"We have messed up the environment in such a way that even the production of cashew nuts is unpredictable," he said.**

American Presiding Bishop Katharine f Jefferts Schori, who earned a doctorate in oceanography specializing in squid and octopuses, told the press that "if we do not pay attention to the health of all creation, the other issues will not be important." "Salvation is about healing, holiness and wholeness," she argued. **"If we don't pay attention to the world around as we are shirking our Christian duty,"** the presiding bishop said. #

## Daily Mail

11th August 2008

**\* Factory farms 'to blame for new superbugs' \***

**By Sean Poulter - Consumer Affairs Editor**

HEAVY use of antibiotics on factory farms is creating a range of superbugs, causing illness on a massive scale and numerous fatalities, it is claimed today. Food campaigners have high-lighted the fact that around half of all the antibiotics used in Britain are given to farm animals to prevent or treat disease. Disease is a problem of cramped conditions found particularly on intensive farms producing chicken, eggs and pigs. A number of superbug versions of common food poisoning bugs have emerged in recent years, including sal' monella, campylobacter and E.coli.

These bugs have developed an immunity to antibiotics, which means doctors have difficulty treating people who become infected with them. The issue has been recognised by the World Health Organisation and doctors and academics who have called for a reduction in the use of antibiotics on farms, and in human medicine. **The problem has been high-lighted by organic farming expert and policy adviser to the Soil Association, Richard Young, in a study published by the Food Commission today. An estimated 30,000 people each year in the UK are affected by E.coli infections which are resistant to almost all antibiotics. There are an estimated 4,200 deaths.**

The Daily Mail revealed the discovery of a superbug version of E.coli among sick and dying calves on a farm in Wales in February 2005. Twenty-seven of 48 calves examined - 56 per cent, carried the bug. By the autumn of last year, the number of farms with animals carrying the bug had risen to 32, stretching from Cheshire to Wiltshire and Somerset. In June, the Mail revealed how a deadly strain of an MRSA superbug found in pigs had been transmitted to humans in the UK.

The MRSA strain, ST398, which has been linked to deaths from pneumonia, has been found in pigs, meat and humans on the Continent. It was first identified in the Netherlands as recently as 2003, where it is now responsible for 30 per cent of all human cases. A number of limited surveys on the Continent and in the UK have apparently found the bug in raw pork and chicken.

Mr Young said: The use of antibiotics is a cornerstone of intensive livestock production and because this is such an enormous industry there will inevitably be a reluctance to change. No one wants to stop farmers using antibiotics when they are genuinely needed. However, there are a number of very serious problems now developing and the evidence increasingly suggests that food is part of the problem. 'As such we need an urgent review of the overall situation with clear recommendations to prevent an impending crisis.'

Experts at the European Food Safety Authority have called for a Europe-wide review of safety regimes to tackle the growing menace of food superbugs. The antibiotics used by doctors are also known as antimicrobials, and the immunity developed by these common bugs is known as antimicrobial resistance. A report from EFSA experts published earlier this year concluded: 'Antimicrobial resistance of bacteria is a growing concern as antimicrobials become less effective in fighting human infections. 'This coincides with a rise in bacterial resistance to antimicrobials in animal populations.' They added: 'The principal foods carrying such antimicrobial resistant bacteria are poultry meat, eggs, pork or beef.'

**s.poulter@dailymail.co.uk**

#

# Methodist Recorder

15th May 2008

## Race to save the planet

by Barry Weetman

REALISTIC incentives for installing solar water heating systems are being sought by a West Yorkshire local preacher who would one day like to see demand for home energy generation go through the roof. He believes many more people, including fellow pensioners with sufficient disposable income, might then be encouraged to join him and embark on such an eco-legacy as part of the race to save the planet. But ways of cutting pay-back times for installations must first be found. Above all, energy in all its forms has to be responsibly harnessed, and used as the gift of the Creator God, says 70-year-old retired teacher, John D Anderson, a member of the Baildon church, Shipley, West Yorkshire, whose photo-voltaic (PV), electricity generating roof installation and solar thermal water-heating panels are called the "John D Anderson Solar Power Station

He said, "God gave us the energy that has been stored in the earth and under the seas as gas, oil and coal, and it took the creator a million times longer to provide than the rate at which we are using it up. We use it so profligately as a prodigal race. "I hear people say the energy is there and they are sure God meant us to use it. However it is surely wrong to use it a million times faster than the creator provided it." Mr Anderson is not convinced that any change in attitude can best be achieved through enlightened self-interest or Government legislation. He fears this is the way to generate extra costs. For him, "power to the people" means being among the Christian democrats who want individuals to have much more control over their electricity supply.

As a result of the "John D Anderson Solar Power Station" he recognises how he and his wife have become more attuned to nature. They notice and care more how much the sun is out and how much electricity they are using He said: "This valuing of the natural processes of God's creation is, in the long run, perhaps the most important result of our installing solar systems. We feel there should be as many electricity generating stations as possible, PV, wind, tidal and wave, these will distribute both electrical and, by extension, political power more democratically. "On a big enough scale, renewable generators obviate the need for nuclear power stations and can lead to the phasing out of all generating stations powered temporarily and dangerously by fossil fuels. We could have a truly national electricity supply with each station, linked by the grid, backing up the others." A cheque for £50 from your electricity supplier might seem like a dream, but that is what he gets for three months summer operation of his electricity-generating roof. Alongside this he has reduced the household use of gas by a third.

To qualify for a Low Carbon Buildings Programme grant for renewable energy installations ([www.lowcarb.onbuildings.org.uk](http://www.lowcarb.onbuildings.org.uk)) he had to insulate all the walls of his three-bedroom bungalow home, put 270mm of insulation into the loft, have double glazing and install low-wattage bulbs wherever practical. He also found the nationwide amount for grants was increased from 2007, but the amount per head was greatly reduced. Local authority planning permission was not required for the scheme if the solar thermal panels did not project more than 100mm above the existing -roof.

The Energy Saving Trust had a list of approved contractors for the work. The property had to be re-roofed because of leaks and for the sum of £19,128, including five per cent VAT, John obtained a 2.24 KWh system of photo-voltaic tiles to replace most of the old tiles on a south-facing roof. More than £7,800, VAT at five per cent, was spent on solar thermal panels for the garage roof, two each on east-facing and west-facing roofs. Nothing normally needs to be done to either system. All the systems are actuated by daylight, not sunlight, although they are more efficient when the sun is out. Electricity is often supplied to the National Grid during daytime. John described the Grid as "a battery for us", supplying electricity through the night. Valuing the installation, he said: "'Economy meant originally 'management of the home or environment'. It did not concern money. I am angry that 'economists' have changed its meaning.

### Economical

"Christians, of all people, should stand out against money being the measure of all things. By the first definition the systems are economical, saving perhaps 500 kg of CO2 a year. In money terms the equation is more complex. "I seem to be using very little gas in the summer months. The gas boiler is only actuated for 30 minutes a day, 18.00-18.30, and then only if too little hot water has been provided by the system on a very cloudy day. "The solar thermal system does not supply any hot water for central heating.

"We are paid 9p for every Kwh we generate, even if we use it. This is funded from the Government's Renewable Obligation Certificates (ROCs) held by Good Energy, our generating firm, ([www.good-energy.co.uk](http://www.good-energy.co.uk)). I pay for all the other electricity used." The system will become increasingly effective as gas and electricity prices rise. The value of the house is increasingly enhanced, since the Home Owners' Information Packs must now include energy performance details.

John Anderson said the energy pay-back time was three years. This represented the energy taken to manufacture the panels calculated against the energy generated by the installation. Solar installations therefore

saved much more CO<sub>2</sub> than was required to manufacture them. About £2,500 was rapidly received in grants towards the cost of the PV array.

Working in Africa for eight years helped to make Mr Anderson very conscious of the effects one part of the world could have on another. The Baildon church, where he is a member, is working towards eco-congregation status. He is presently urging a building society to introduce solar installations-linked mortgages. While he recognises solar, wind and wave renewable sources of energy may have important although relatively small-scale and unreliable applications, he finds convincing arguments for tidal power. Mr Anderson said that it was important everyone everywhere swiftly turns to creating the machinery to make renewable energy before the human race runs out of time. #

**3rd July 2008**

### **Charity's carbon pledge solution**

CHRISTIAN relief charity Tearfund is asking people to consider their environmental impact by using a unique scheme to reduce carbon emissions and compensate those struggling to cope with climate change. The scheme, "My Global Impact", was developed by a former co-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Sir John Houghton. It has now been adopted by Tearfund and made available for widespread use. "My Global Impact" allows people to calculate the amount of carbon dioxide they are emitting, pledge to reduce their carbon footprint as far as possible and then pay money into development projects to help poor communities adapt to the ravages of global warming:

Money donated, via the web-based initiative will contribute towards starting new projects to enable struggling communities to develop in a sustainable way, for instance by using clean energy sources such as bio energy, solar and wind power. The amount of money paid by each individual will depend on how much his or her emissions exceed a global per capita "share" of carbon.

#### **Emissions**

Commenting on this, Sir John Houghton said: "In the industrialised north we have become wealthy by burning coal, oil and gas that is causing climate change. By reducing our emissions and sharing this wealth, poor communities being hit by climate change can benefit. **"There is tremendous potential for us to share what we have with those who have so little 'My Global Impact' makes a start towards redressing the balance towards those whose lives are being turned upside down by climate change but who have contributed the least to it."**

Together with its local partner organisations, Tearfund helps communities adapt to climate change as part of its development programmes. Projects funded by the scheme will include helping people to prepare for extreme weather events such as floods or storms and teaching skills in new farming methods to cope with drought and soil erosion.

"My Global Impact" is available online ([www.tearfund.org](http://www.tearfund.org)). #

**3rd July 2008**

### **Cycling clergy on a climate change mission**

AN ecumenical delegation of clergy on a mission to tackle climate change cycled to 10 Downing Street last week to make an environmental plea to the heart of the Government. The 10 Church leaders delivered a petition of 10,000 signatures, asking the Government to make tougher emission cuts in the Climate Change Bill as it enters its final stages in Parliament.

Baptist minister the Rev Graham Dodds, from Leeds, was among the group of cycling ministers. He hopes politicians will take note of the petition, which was organised by Christian relief and development agency Tearfund. "Climate change causes the poorest people to suffer and the longer we wait, the more suffering there will be," he said. The call comes as the final preparations are being made for the G8 Summit next week (July 7-9), where Gordon Brown and fellow leaders of the world's most powerful economies will gather in Japan for their annual meeting.

Japanese Prime Minister and G8 chair Yasuo Fukuda has put climate change at the top of the agenda for the meeting. He is seeking to solidify support for last year's G8 commitment to reduce emissions by 50 per cent by 2050. This is 30 per cent lower than many church and environmental groups believe is necessary to tackle global warming. Tearfund campaigns manager Ben Niblett said: "As the discussions unfold in Japan next week, campaigners are undoubtedly keen for action. However, unusually, they are also keen that the G8 does nothing to muddy the water.

The G8's focus on climate change is crucial in helping to build momentum. "However, announcements must not detract from the UN climate change process, which brings all countries to the table from the biggest emitters to the least developed nations. "What is needed is a global deal that is fair and provides developing nations with a low carbon path to development, not relying on the outdated carbon hungry technology of the industrial revolution." #