

# CARING FOR OUR COMMON HOME, AT HOME.

This year, I ask that we look beyond personal lives, to our role within our wider communities and our world. I speak about Climate Change and our care for the Environment of our planet. This is not a problem that we can just leave to governments to remedy. They must certainly play their part and we must pray that the recent Conferences in Paris and Poland have done much to unite nations in a common endeavour. But Pope Francis tells us that we are all required, every one of us, to make changes to our lives and begin to repair the damage before matters become irreversible. Pope Francis is leading the way in calling us to be aware of what we have done to our world and the certainty that, without immediate and sustained action, we will inflict irreparable

damage on our planet which will adversely affect the lives of our children and future generations. This is most certainly a matter which is rooted in our Faith. But now we are coming to understand what we have done and we have time to correct the damage, if we act quickly. A great deal of difference can be made through a number of small actions in our personal lives. Pope Francis has the principle of no action being too small to make the effort. "There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions<sup>1</sup>."

I challenge this Diocese to take the lead in Pope Francis' call to "care for our common home". Let's make the Diocese of Salford a flagship for effective action.

+Bishop John Arnold

## WHY DO WE HAVE AN URGENT CALL TO ACTION?



### 6th Mass Extinction.

We have seen a 60% decline of all wildlife since the 1970's<sup>2</sup>.



### Only 60 years of intensive farming remain.

Our wasteful diets lead to the loss of 12 million hectares of agricultural land around the world to desert each year<sup>3</sup>.



### Climate Change

is set to create extreme and unpredictable weather events, with those most at risk having contributed the least.



### 40.3 Million modern slaves

work for us, providing us with cheap goods and services, driving a cycle of mindless consumerism<sup>4</sup>.



### Forgive them. They know not what they do.

Our destruction of the natural world shows a lack of care towards God's creation.

## WHAT WILL BE LEFT FOR OUR CHILDREN?

Due to our highly interconnected world even the smallest of our actions has effects far beyond our local community. This is because we are connected to neighbour, nature and planet in an integral ecology, making the world our "wider community". We therefore cannot truly love our neighbours without caring for nature and our common home.

There is nothing unaffected by our ecological crisis. Through our integral ecology our lifestyles impact upon workers' rights, nature, gender equality, food security, mental health, disease, beauty, fresh water. If you care for any of these things then care for the planet should be part of your very being. "It is

important not to pursue separate solutions when addressing climate change, but rather it is crucial that an integrated approach is considered and applied at all levels of action<sup>5,7</sup> This is why St Pope John Paul II calls us to undergo a new journey towards "ecological conversion." The connectedness (ecology) of our planet means that through our everyday actions we become complicit in exploiting our neighbours and the natural resources and ecosystems they rely on. By being aware of the connections and making small changes in our lifestyles, we can use these links through nature and environment to serve rather than exploit our neighbours.

## MAKING OUR ACTIONS EFFECTIVE

We need to act quickly. We must ensure that the small actions we take in our personal lives do indeed make a great deal of difference. We can do this through prioritising the most effective actions first, which often take the least effort. For example not flying or eating meat will have enormously greater impact than buying biodegradable dental floss.

We all have different skills and resources, so everyone's actions will be different. For instance not everyone can afford

to buy organic food, so don't get hung up on it. Find the most effective things that YOU can do. Do all that is within your means to do. When faced with a decision and you don't know what the most ecological thing to do is follow the tried and tested rule: REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE. The words of this slogan appear in this order for a very good reason. They allow us to prioritise prevention of a deepening ecological crisis rather than an endless battle against its symptoms.

# THE CHALLENGE

We are facing a global problem but global solutions are made up of seemingly tiny actions. The apparently insignificant actions of millions of people can make the difference. Set yourself some targets from each of the categories. The higher up the list, the more effective your actions will be.

## 1. REDUCE

### Meat:

- Eat less meat but make it a real celebration when you do.
- Eat a few more vegetarian meals every week.

### Shipping of food:

- Buy locally grown vegetables or grow your own, even if it is just in a window box.
- Check where your food comes from.
- Try eating seasonally.
- Do not waste food, learn to cook with leftovers.

### Travel:

- Don't fly. Take the train or bus on holiday instead.
- Use video conferencing for meetings.
- Use public transport, a bike or walk.
- Share a journey.

### Energy use:

- Switch to a green energy provider.
- Draft proof your house.
- Spend less time on the internet.
- Do not leave electrical goods on standby when not in use.
- Turn the central heating down a few degrees and maybe wear a pullover at home.

### Stuff:

- Buy less stuff. The extraction of raw materials needed to make our stuff is often extremely harmful to workers and their environment.
- Buy less clothes.
- Buy fewer gadgets.
- If you need to buy something vote with your wallet. Our purchases have ethical implications, whether we realise it or not.
- When buying something consider how was it made. Will it last? What happens to it at the end of its life?

### Water:

- Do not leave the water running while you clean your teeth.
- Do not leave the shower running while you wash.

## 2. REUSE

### Fixing:

- Could I fix any electronic devices, clothes, cars or household appliances rather than buying new?
- Could I help others with my fixing skills?

### Sharing:

- Could I share my belongings, tools, books, clothes with others in my community?
- Instead of throwing things away see if anyone has use for them.
- Consider using a sharing app.

## 3. RECYCLE

### Prevention:

- Could you prevent waste in the first place by avoiding buying overly packaged or single use goods.
- Be prepared and carry a reusable cup and pack a home made lunch.

### Compost:

- Could you make compost with waste food and paper to grow more food?

### Recycling:

- Make sure you know what can and cannot be recycled.
- Could your council improve their service? Let them know.
- Make sure your recycling is clean.

## REWILD

Whilst not one of the main three rules, rewilding is an incredibly effective and essential instrument in healing our world. If you have a garden you have a share of God's good earth. So leave a corner (the larger the better) undisturbed for insects, birds, amphibians and small mammals and pray to God they thrive. Also make sure there are gaps in garden walls to act as wildlife corridors from one garden to another. Put a bell on the cat.

## CHANGING THE WORLD

Are any of these actions transferrable to your parish community or work? You are invited to form parish groups to encourage practical steps and to consider what the parish might do, like install bike racks to encourage cycling to church, look to install insulation, have meat-free parish meals, ban single use cups for coffee after mass, make sure your parish

recycles etc...

Most importantly; have fun and joy in forging a brighter future. Take time to sit still and admire creation in its infinite complexity and minute details. Learn more! Take opportunities to deepen your understanding of the ecological crisis and what you can do about it. Do not forget to pray.

### WHAT NEXT?

Why not host a Global Healing screening with your parish and then tackle Cafod's Live Simply award.