

Caritas Diocese of Salford Environmental Policy:

Hearing the Cry of the Poor and the Earth: An example policy seeking the Common Good for all of God's Creation

INTRODUCTION

Caritas Diocese of Salford is committed to an environmental policy that respects the earth as God's creation and acknowledges that our care for it needs to be integrated into the life and mission of our diocese.

The policy will help build personal, school, parish and diocesan responses to poverty and the environment. The policy is for every person – young and old, parishioner and employee of the Diocese of Salford.

THE EARTH - OUR COMMON HOME

Pope Francis through his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* has taken a global lead in encouraging every person on the planet to take action and care for the earth - our common home - and preserve it for future generations.

Laudato Si' is a call to an 'ecological conversion' that calls each one of us to recognise the connection between our faith, our planet and the most vulnerable people and take up an active role in preserving the gift of life on earth. That is why Pope Francis's papal encyclical is not addressed just to governments and large multinational corporations but to 'every person living on this planet'

A PERSONAL CALL TO CONVERSION

As individuals and as a faith community we must accept that there are serious environmental problems because we are not caring for the earth and that we are complicit in the exploitation of the earth's resources in a way that is unsustainable. We are not '*Hearing the Cry of the Poor and the Earth*'.

If we are not hearing and acting upon the cries of the poor and the earth, then we will not get involved or take responsibility for the damage we are doing to the earth and its people. In particular we will not hear the cry of the poor who experience disproportionately the negative effects of environmental degradation due to the unsustainable lifestyle of the rich. As Pope Francis says, 'the earth, our home, is beginning to look more like an immense pile of filth.'

Each of us are called to take concrete steps – from reducing consumption to working for political change – to better care for creation. As individuals we can all play our part and collectively we can do a great deal.

PRACTICAL PERSONAL ACTION

1. Remember to say thank you for the food on our table by saying grace before and after a meal.
2. Pray for justice and peace; thank God for the beautiful world we live in. Encourage your parishes and school to pray for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.
3. Talk to your neighbours; know who they are and know their needs. Ask yourself how can I help my neighbours and my local community? Find time to visit your elderly neighbours and spend a little time with them.
4. Volunteer to give some or financially support a local, national or international charity or organisation whose values you share.
5. Buy what we genuinely need and don't get caught up in what Pope Francis calls "a whirlwind of needless buying and spending". When we buy goods, we validate the practices of the producer. We should look to support those that produce sustainably.
6. Eat less meat; consider a meat-free day or even two days. Reducing your consumption of meat will help reduce the levels of methane (greenhouse gases) gasses produced by cattle that also eat grain that could be directed to human consumption.
7. Food miles - Buy local produce that has a low carbon footprint because it has not had to be transported long distances. Try to buy more organic produce that is kinder to the environment and does not require large quantities of artificial fertilisers. This helps smaller scale farmers who are the majority of the world's producers.
8. Reduce the amount of plastics we use, for example by reducing the use of crisp packets, plastic drink bottles and toiletries containing plastic beads.
9. Cut down on unnecessary journeys and use public transport more instead of a car. Put a bike rack in your parish, school or place of work.

10. Energy conservation – using less energy- has clear economic as well as environmental benefits. Buy your electricity from green providers who are committed to renewable energy sources even if it costs a few pence more. Think about generating your own energy e.g. solar or hot water panels.

A CALL TO CONVERSION

Throughout the Diocese of Salford we have a great resource in our schools and parishes to educate people - young and old – about our individual and collective responsibility to care for our common home. We need to put Laudato Si at the heart of our faith and at the heart of our educational work.

We need to recognise that that the ecological crisis is not only a summons to profound 'interior conversion' but it is also needs to be a call to a 'community conversion' it is to be a lasting change of heart. We need to encourage individuals of all ages to take their own personal action in solidarity with the poorest and most disadvantaged people and see this personal action as being in collective solidarity with the poor who experience disproportionately the negative impact of climate change and the exploitation of the earth's resources.

The culture within a parish is the starting place for a change of attitude. Each parish and diocesan department can be encouraged to reflect on how we can in Pope Francis's words become a 'poor church for the poor'.

PRACTICAL COLLECTIVE ACTION

1. Support a community garden scheme where a local group acquires land for the benefit of the community and share the produce they grow. Have a little wild life area in your garden; buy a Bob Bat Box from CAFOD and use it to create a safe habitat for British bats and birds.
2. Avoid the use of pesticides that have a detrimental effect on bees and other pollinators.
3. Parishes with graveyards shouldn't cut their grass too short to encourage an environment that can support more varieties plant and animal life.
4. Switch to clean energy producers. Support community energy schemes that sell renewable electricity and invest their profits into the community.
5. Ask your parish to sign up to the Live Simply award that will enable your local faith community to live and work together for a fairer world that looks after

the environment. This is a very practical and meaningful way to show your commitment to tackling climate change and poverty. cafod.org.uk/livesimply

6. Become a Fair Trade Parish and have a deposit point for food banks.
7. Organise a short course on Catholic social teaching and draw up an action plan for your school, local parish and community

TOGETHER: INDIVIDUALS, SCHOOLS PARISH & DIOCESE

As a community of faith, we need to explore how we can become truly missionary and evangelising. Here are a few of the key things we can do:

- Pray to encourage a reflective attentiveness to cries of the poor and the earth and develop worship materials that praise God for His creation
- Raise awareness and educate people on situations and issues that result in injustice, violence and damage to the environment
- Be open to and engage with victims of injustice and damage to the environment, building relationships of mutuality and respect
- Commit to campaign against unjust policies and structures that are detrimental to people and the environment
- Collaborate with those who have similar concerns within and beyond the Christian family
- Encourage acts of service, care and hospitality to those in need especially to the hungry, homeless and destitute
- Collect and share money and resources for those in need, especially those who are impoverished by the damage done to the environment.

MONITORING

The policy will need to be monitored. Caritas Diocese of Salford is committed to measuring the positive changes to our environment and the people we serve and will publish an audit of progress towards making this policy real.