

JPIC 95 – MARCH 2020

Health in the Lord and the Blessing of the Holy Spirit..[Rule of Saint Albert]
Saudavel iha Maromak no grasa Spirtu Santo Nian .. [Regula Sto Alberto]

Climate Science, It's Gospel!

a reflection by Peter Thomas, JPIC Team



One of my favourite psalms is Ps.8...
*When I look at your heavens, the work
of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have
established;
what are human beings that you are
mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?*

*“Doomsday predictions can no longer
be met with irony or disdain.
We may well be leaving to coming
generations debris, desolation and
filth.”*

(Pope Francis from Laudato Si)



With the world climate crisis I suggest something, not the same but similar.....

*When I look at your earth, the work of
your creation,
the beautiful landscapes and seas that
you have established:
what right have I to vandalise them?
Where is my sense of stewardship?*

Universally scientists predict the earth is becoming a hot-house with countries like our own experiencing devastating and more frequent fires, floods and cyclonic conditions. Elsewhere, in the Amazon rainforest which covers 550 million hectares is losing its capacity to soak up carbon dioxide because of deforestation. Without urgent action in less than 100 years the Amazon, often referred to as ‘the lungs of the world’ will be gone.



A few years ago I was on the island of Tarawa, the main population centre of Kiribati, a small country in the central Pacific Ocean with a population of 116,000 of which more than half live on the Tarawa atoll. Kiribati is famous for its fly-fishing, great scuba diving and astonishing sea birds. When out walking on the side of the busy road that runs the length of the island I found myself sinking slowly into the earth. I penetrated the slither of top soil, broke the coral beneath the soil and found myself almost knee high in sea water. Kiribati is facing annihilation as the rising sea level has broken through fresh-water ponds threatening villages and displacing communities. Climate crisis is real and urgent for Kiribati and other Pacific Island nations and it's real for Australia!

Far from the humid heat of the Amazon in Antarctica the hottest ever temperature of 18.3 degrees was recently recorded. Scientist have declared the region the fastest warming area on earth. The glaciers along the West coast of this southern continent known for its ice, snow and an abundance of wildlife that thrives in the sea and on land in sub-zero temperatures have retreated in the last 20 years and considerably accelerated in the last 5 years. These two examples are just two among hundreds around the world that the earth is warming.



Throughout the world Australia is acquiring a weak reputation for its lack of clear policies on climate

change by relying on carrying over credits from carbon emission reductions under the Kyoto protocol.

Therefore certain politicians gloat that we are on track to reach the 2016 Paris targets. However, the scientists remind us that the actual reductions over a 10 year period from 2020 to 2030 will be in the order of only 10% of the Paris targets. Will we continue to bury our heads in the sand when the doomsday clock tells us that we are at a crucial crossroad? This is a political issue, but more importantly a moral issue that has been recognized by many as the crucial moral issue in our time.

“Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”

(Pope Francis from Laudato Si)

Celebrated Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins is perhaps best known for much quoted poem, “God’s Grandeur” that begins with the words.....

“The world is charged with the grandeur of God..”

...but in the same poem Hopkins bemoans the harm to nature of the industrial revolution

*“All is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell:
The soil is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.”*



Melbourne Anglican bishop, Philip Huggins attended the recent United Nations Climate Change talks in Madrid. Reflecting on the conference in ‘The Melbourne Anglican’ he wrote; ‘As the American novelist Wendell Berry stated, “we must live the life we are given, which may be different to the life we had been planning.”’

Huggins like most commentators declared the Madrid talks as unsuccessful, however he wrote optimistically....‘There is a guiding wisdom from folk like Gandhi and Martin Luther King, who responded to major needs for change in their day. The problems are huge. What we can do about them seems insignificant. However, it is ESSENTIAL that we do it!’

Carmelite spirituality is the experience of God in all aspects of life listening in all its dimensions to the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth. It requires its followers to become immersed in the mystery of God and God’s creation by being a prophetic witness to the challenges brought about by climate change. Just as John of the Cross liberated God so too the modern day follower of Carmelite spirituality liberates God with a cosmic consciousness of creation. Pope Francis again...

*“A true ecological approach becomes a social approach:
it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment,
so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”*

(Pope Francis from Laudato Si)

Grant us, Lord God, a vision of your world as your love would have it:
a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;
a world where the riches of creation are shared,
and everyone can enjoy them;
a world where different races and cultures live in harmony
and mutual respect;
a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.
Give us the inspiration and courage to build it,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AUSTRALIA'S DEVASTATING BUSHFIRES HAVE ENSURED THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES IS NOW FRONT OF MIND

We decorate trees for festive occasions; we shelter under them in the heat; we admire their beauty. We also tear them down to make way for cultivation, and turn them into wood chip and paper.

The world's forests are effectively the lungs of our planet and its inhabitants. Does our ecospirituality address the wonder and waste that accompany our appreciation of and use of trees?



CAN WE VALUE THE MANY BENEFITS THAT OUR TREES PROVIDE?

Some practical ways trees can help us survive climate change

[Gregory Moore, University of Melbourne](#)



In Australia, trees and urban ecosystems must be at the heart of our climate change response. Governments have a big role to play – but here are three actions everyday Australians can take as well.

1 Plant trees to cool your home

Trees can help cool your home. Two medium-sized trees (8-10m tall) to the north or northwest of a house can lower the temperature inside by several degrees, saving you hundreds of dollars in power costs each year.

2 Keep your street trees alive

It's in everyone's interests to keep trees on your nature strip alive. Adequate tree canopy cover is the least costly, most sustainable way of cooling our cities. Trees cool the surrounding air when their



leaves transpire and the water evaporates. Shade from trees can also triple the lifespan of bitumen, which can save governments millions each year in road resurfacing. Tree roots also soak up water after storms, which will become more extreme in a warming climate. In fact, estimates suggest trees can hold up to 40% of the rainwater that hits them. Tree canopy cover is declining in Australia. Governments are removing trees from public and private land at the time we need them most.

3. Green our rural areas

Outside cities, we must preserve remnant vegetation and revegetate less productive agricultural land. This will provide shade and moderate increasingly strong winds, caused by climate change. Strategically planting windbreaks and preserving roadside vegetation are good ways to improve rural canopy cover.

Full article available at *The Conversation*: <https://theconversation.com/here-are-5-practical-ways-trees-can-help-us-survive-climate-change-129753>

Trees Joyce Kilmer - 1886-1918

I think that I shall never see
A poem as lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
Against the sweet earth's flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.