

JPIC 97 – JUNE 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]

## World Environment Day ...Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2020

*"We depend upon the natural world for every mouthful of food we eat and every lungful of air we breathe."*

*David Attenborough*

## HOPE FROM THE ASHES ...

By Peter Thomas, JPIC Team

Australian singer Sarah Storer, known mostly for her country music has released a song called *"Next Year People"* a powerful reminder of the devastation caused by drought. It begins, *"You can't live without hope...."* alluding to the fact that there is always next year when the rains might fall. Written by her co-singer Colin Hay; Baby Boomers would remember Colin as he was the front man for the hugely successful Australian band "Men at Work". The lyrics are edgy; much like the physical and emotional distress that drought brings to farmers. *"We've had dust storms that spit out the dirt....we've had winds that cut up your face like blizzards that strip all the paint off a car. Fires like twisters, no sisters of mercy they come without warning."* Then Colin Hay has written a cry of the kind that we might express when we need to demonstrate our anger with our maker.....*"God is roaring drunk and out on the town."* God is a metaphor for climate change. **It's a Laudato Si song!**

Colin Hay's song is released at a time when we have reports from dozens of countries that clear skies and smog free urban landscapes have brought about an upside to the restrictions triggered by Covid-19. For those in denial about man-made carbon emission causing a detrimental effect on our environment the recent curbing of automobile traffic and planes in the sky makes their renunciation farcical. In my local area, like areas all across the globe people were walking

and cycling, cars remained garaged, public transport was near empty and where I live on the edge of a CBD the air was pure. Some creative city planners are working feverishly to harness the respite to make urban environment's more pedestrian friendly.

A group of scientist writing in The Conversation (May 20/'20) have crunched the numbers in 69 countries covering 97% of global emissions in six economic sectors. They demonstrated that in early April the reduction in global activity peaked and on April 7, global emissions were 17% lower than an equivalent day in 2019. Wow!

This clearing of the air, this lowering of greenhouse gas emissions came as the skies were free of planes and the streets free of cars but now as restrictions are being lifted the cars are back and soon the aeroplanes will follow. Some experts are saying that the decline in emissions during this period has been the biggest in living history, the result of economic desolation, but alas is it but a temporary environmental blessing?

Figures from China show that carbon emissions were down an estimated 18% between early February and mid-March due to falls in coal consumption and industrial output. Emissions plunged 25% in the first four weeks following Chinese New Year. Early data shows similar reductions in the EU and US. Power demands in Italy and France were down by as much as 27%



Thea Ormerod, President of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) writing recently for the ABC's Religion & Ethics website reminded us that the timing of the commemorative global **'Laudato Si' week (16-24 May)** couldn't be more fitting for those of us promoting an economic recovery from Covid-19 that tackles unemployment, rebuilds a resilient economy and addresses climate change, all at the same time.

In April Pope Francis said that our environmental track record shows *"that we have sinned against the earth."* He quoted a Spanish saying which Thea Ormerod included in her piece for the ABC. *"God always forgives; we humans sometimes forgive, and sometimes not; the earth never forgives"*. Ormerod comments, *'The earth does not forgive; if we have despoiled the earth, its response will be very ugly.'*

ABC Radio National's six-part series **'Hot Mess'** (It's available as a podcast) ended recently with a glimmer of hope for the world coming to grips with climate change. The hope came from business. It demonstrated that technological change, the finance sector waking up to climate change, the insurance, banking and heavy industry sectors turning their backs on coal and fossil fuels in favour of renewables is a big plus for lowering

emissions. Advances in technology have made investments in renewable technology cheaper and cheaper and cheaper.

So while some politicians vacillate over ideology and certain sections of society shillyshally over climate change it seems that economics holds out a glimmer of light in what most of us see as a coal black future. But let's not forget the kids, the climate strike generation that will soon have the vote.

Pope Francis in a seeming endorsement of Greta Thunberg and the school strikers said in his April 2020 Earth Day message, *"still it will be necessary for our children to take to the streets to teach us the obvious: we have no future if we destroy the very environment that sustains us."*

In 2015 Paul McCartney released **'A Love Song to the Earth'** with lyrics that challenged.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLCSTn6\\_uU0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLCSTn6_uU0)

*"The only real question that matters is a matter of perspective. Who'd have thought the ground we stand on could be so fragile. This is a love song to the earth."* The song was created to help people wake-up to the problems of climate change in the hope that we will take action.

**Pope Francis' 'Laudato Si' beckons us to continue the journey....**

**MELBOURNE'S CARMELITE WHITEFRIARS COLLEGE** has been shortlisted for Victoria's largest sustainability award program for schools. The students are recognised for their ongoing work to reduce the College's carbon footprint. Improved waste operations include all College composting, soft plastics, co-mingled, battery, electronics, stationary recycling and staff recycled book, shoe and bag stalls.

This action is in step with Pope Francis' Laudato Si message to "Care for the Earth", while at the same time reducing waste cost and educating the Whitefriars community as global citizens for a sustainable future.



## Who Will Speak.....?

*A contribution by Fr Wayne Stanhope , OCarm, Parish Priest, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Coorparoo, Brisbane*

In our modern secular society, have we allowed the voice of faith to be removed from conversations happening in the 'market place' and simply been sidelined as an irrelevant minority concern?

Pope Francis, who wrote recently of the role of the church for the future drawing upon the image of the women going to the tomb after Jesus's crucifixion. ***The women who followed Jesus did not allow themselves to be paralysed by anxiety and suffering. They found ways to overcome simply by being and accompanying.***

The message of faith must be spoken, not just within the confines of our churches but in the 'market place' as well. Yes, it will be a positive move when we can gather together again in our church buildings, but ***how we gather, and how we are heard as a community of compassion and inclusion*** are more important than just being in a building! There are many human issues that our people of faith are being challenged by in this current time, and ***a message of hope and solidarity*** is urgently needed to be spoken.

The living of our faith beyond this time is seemingly absent from all dialogue. Surely it cannot just be 'business as usual'! There are concerns far beyond and significantly more important than when church buildings will again be open.

Where is the voice for the marginalised of our society, where is the word of justice for them? Dr Cristy Clark in a recent article in *Eureka Street*, rightly observed that during



*this time, the frighteningly precarious nature of our lives has been thoroughly exposed, and so too has the inequality of it all. Even in a pandemic, we aren't all suffering equally.*

There can be no true community without a concern for each other, including those who are most in need. Dr Clark again: *We can re-imagine a better kind of normal. We just have to be brave enough to try*

In recognising Jesus' authority, this is exactly what his disciples were called to do. Jesus' word was a genuine expression of God the Father's compassion, healing, gratefulness, strength, and transformation. It changed lives and brought about freedom from oppression and hope in a future beyond the limits of what could be seen or imagined!

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given...Go, therefore and make disciples..." Matthew 28:17*

This is who we are meant to be, to live our faith with bold confidence both within our churches and beyond, into the market place.

This is true discipleship, believing in God who is with us, in the highs and lows of our lived reality. Our very communion as a people of faith must come from a grateful heart for what we receive and for who we become, as one people in Christ, embracing of all humanity but especially the marginalised of our society.

We are church, within our homes, within our families and within our wider community.

We are 'authored into living life fully' when the word spoken is deeply rooted in the reality of life experienced. The voice we need to hear spoken, is that which 'authors us into living our lives as best we can', for the building up of a community that is always outward focused towards the poor and the marginalised in a true spirit of justice and mercy.



I continue to yearn for a church that is both totally vulnerable and transparently honest, could we not be that voice for all people at this time?

In her article, Clark goes on to observe that *there are so many systems that do not serve (the majority of) us well, but which we have accepted as immutable for too long.*

We thank you, O God for the wisdom and knowledge you bestow upon scientists who work at revealing the secrets of creation.

We stand in awe and wonder at the history of the universe and of life on this planet.

This knowledge strengthens our faith in your creative power.

We are grateful for this wonderful creation and for being part of your blessing.

Praise be to you, O God.

She has previously quoted Booker Prize winning author Arundhati Roy who points out *this pandemic represents a rupture in the fabric of our societies and is likely to act as a portal between one world and the next. We will have to be very careful about where this portal takes us. If we want to step through into a better world, we need to be crystal clear about what that looks like and deeply committed to the values we will use to guide us.*

It makes sense that the values we use to guide us have a concrete form. From a discerning heart we must listen to a voice we recognise, as speaking from a place of shared story. We need to become contemplative and open to listening.

*A contemplative person is someone who knows that they don't know everything and trusts that they are being held by something much larger, wiser and more loving than themselves.* Richard Rohr ofm.

The Christian of the future must be both reflective and humble. (feet on the ground!)

***We can re-imagine a better kind of normal.  
We just have to be brave enough to try.***

*Fr Wayne*

