

**FOREWORD FROM ARCHBISHOP GILBERT FOR DRAFT FRAMEWORK TOWARDS AN
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FOR THE ARCHDIOCESE**

The decision of the Catholic Commission for Social Justice to fulfill resolution 6 of the Third Sitting of the Archdiocesan Synod by opening a consultation process to develop an Environmental Policy for the Archdiocese of Port of Spain is an important step in making the actions of the Synod known not only to the Archdiocese but also to the entire Nation.

I am very willing to accept the invitation to write a brief introduction to the Draft for the consultation which is entitled, "Reconciliation with Creation."

The theology of the Catholic Church on the Environment is voluminous. There are scholars who have specialized in the field of creation, environment and ecology all of their lives. The division of theology on Creation is an ethical or moral category in Church teaching.

While the Church accepts in principle the established data of science on creation, the Church approaches the interrelated issues of creation, environment and ecology primarily from the viewpoint of theology – Sacred Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium. The logical questions are where would an interested person find this teaching in general and where is its application to particular cultures and situations to be found?

The answer to that question is on four levels: 1) Papal Teaching; 2) The Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church; 3) The teaching of the Vatican Department called the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; and 4) The Teaching of the Conferences of Bishops throughout the World.

A dedicated scholar could spend her or his entire professional life studying, digesting and sharing this theology. Since most people would never have the time to dedicate themselves to such a project, it is the responsibility of particular churches (dioceses) to communicate the message to the people.

It is important to note that the theology of stewardship for creation is the basis of the motivation for taking the practical steps to protect the environment. Unless people are properly motivated, there is little hope they will persevere in the long term process of protecting and sustaining the environment.

Resolution 6 from the Synod gives three practical ways for teaching and witnessing to the theology of the Church on the Environment: the family, the school and the parish. The Environmental Policy for the Archdiocese and the specific help from the Social Justice Commission will provide material for reflection for families, schools and parishes.

The journey of environmental education and action will not be easy. Although consensus is developing among scientific experts, we shall have to face challenges: indifference among the general population and even resistance due to national, regional and international economic

pressures. However, Gospel values must be preached. It is our responsibility to future generations to use every means at our disposal to preach it well.

May God bless the efforts of the Social Justice Commission with success!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Edward J. Gilbert". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Most Reverend Edward J. Gilbert C.Ss.R.

Archbishop of Port of Spain

February 25, 2010.