



RECONCILIATION WITH CREATION



Supporting Document to the Draft framework towards an Environmental Policy for The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Port of Spain, T&T

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth. Psalm 104:30.

This document provides more detailed information to support the *Draft framework towards an Environmental Policy for the Archdiocese* which is being circulated for consultation by the Catholic Commission for Social Justice (CCSJ), on behalf of the Catholic Church in T&T. Both documents are currently accessible on CCSJ's website: www.rcsocialjusticett.org. The draft framework will be published in a 4-page pull-out supplement in Catholic News on 14 March, 2010. Hard copies of the draft framework, a 6 page Reference Section, a 4 page Executive Summary, and this supporting document can be obtained from CCSJ's office.

The consultation period will run from Tues 23 Feb. - 30 June, 2010. All comments are welcome. These will inform the preparation of the Archdiocese's Environmental Policy. Inter alia, the document is intended as a study guide and action plan for all people of goodwill. Comments can be submitted via e-mail at: rcsocjus@carib-link.net, verbally, or in writing to Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ, Justice Desk, Archbishop's House, 27 Maraval Road, Port of Spain. Tel: 299 8945 or 290 1635.

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A. Objectives of the *Draft framework towards an Archdiocesan Environmental Policy*:

“...how vital it is to respect the ecology of nature, if we are not to cause serious harm to the world which future generations will receive from us”.
(Pope Benedict XVI)

1. To bring the Gospel and the teachings of the Catholic Church to bear on the issue of environmental/ecological justice.
2. To raise awareness of the Catholic Church’s commitment to promote human and environmental ecology as key elements to achieve authentic development for humankind and for all of creation.
3. To identify resources and practical ways in which individuals, parishes, schools, the public and private sectors in Trinidad and Tobago can reconcile themselves with God’s creation.
4. To motivate individuals and organizations to take responsibility to “cultivate and care for” God’s creation (Gen 2:15).

B. The Church's teaching on humankind's relationship with the environment:

Genesis

"Praise be my Lord for our mother the Earth, which sustains us and keeps us, and yields diverse fruits, and flowers of many colours, and grass" (St Francis of Assisi, Patron Saint for Ecology).

The Catholic Church in Trinidad and Tobago is concerned to protect and promote authentic human development and environmental ecology which are both inextricably linked. Creation is the work of God and is God's gift to us. As stated in Genesis 1, God created everything – the heaven, the earth, the birds, the plants, the land, the ocean, and "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31)

Human beings were created in God's image and likeness and given the responsibility to "cultivate and care for" God's Creation (Genesis 2:15). The Catholic Church has always urged humankind to care for, preserve, develop and restore the environment. The teaching of the Magisterium on this issue is clear. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church reminds us that we are charged to care for "its harmony and development." (n. 451).

Our responsibility as stewards of God's creation must be placed within the context of the mystery of the Incarnation of God, which, as St Ambrose says "is the salvation of the whole of Creation". And in Colossians 1:15-20 we read: "all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things and in him all things hold together, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of the cross."

We are one human family and while we seek to address environmental issues that impact on us now, let us remember that we are not to hand over to future generations God's creation depleted of its resources. (cf. Gen 1:4,10,12,18,21,25). (Gen 1,27). Gen 1:31), (cf. Gen 1:26-30). The "common good" includes a concern for those who will come after us.

A call to reflection and action/Pope John Paul II: The ecological crisis - a moral issue

"This is a kairos moment, a moment of awakening to a new level of understanding that draws us to assume responsibility for human actions deleterious to the interconnected life of the whole planet. We are challenged to an ethical stance toward the natural world and our role in it." (Global climate change: Reflections from the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, 2007).

This draft framework is a call to reflection and action if we are to address the environmental crisis which, as Pope John Paul II stated in 1990, is, at its core, a moral challenge. He said:

“Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past . . . A new ecological awareness is beginning to emerge...”

He pointed out the “growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life...”

“When the ecological crisis is set within the broader context of the search for peace within society, we can understand better the importance of giving attention to what the earth and its atmosphere are telling us: namely, that there is an order in the universe which must be respected, and that the human person, endowed with the capability of choosing freely, has a grave responsibility to preserve this order for the well-being of future generations. . . . The ecological crisis is a moral issue.” (Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message: Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation – also known as: The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility (1990)).

Environmental stewardship in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

“The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity...*Human beings*’ dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of their neighbour, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation. (2415)

“At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that, by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's Body and Blood. Faithful to the Lord's command the Church continues to do, in his memory and until his glorious return, what he did on the eve of his Passion: “He took bread...” “He took the cup filled with wine...” The signs of bread and wine become, in a way surpassing understanding, the Body and Blood of Christ; they continue also to signify the goodness of creation.” (1333)

“The Eucharist, the sacrament of our salvation accomplished by Christ on the cross, is also a sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving for the work of creation. In the Eucharistic sacrifice the whole of creation loved by God is presented to the Father through the death and the Resurrection of Christ. Through Christ the Church can offer the sacrifice of praise in thanksgiving for all that God has made good, beautiful, and just in creation and in humanity.” (1359)

“The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of praise by which the Church sings the glory of God in the name of all creation.” (1361)

“Since God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves *human beings*...And this love which God blesses is

intended to be fruitful and to be realized in the common work of watching over creation...” (1604)

“God wills the *interdependence of creatures*. The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other.” (340)

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church: a correct understanding of the environment

“*To God belong earth and all it holds, the world and all who live in it*” (Ps 24:1).

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church is critical of human beings’ “pretension of exercising unconditional dominion over things” (n. 461). The environment, it says, should not be reduced “to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited...A correct understanding of the environment prevents the utilitarian reduction of nature to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited. At the same time, it must not absolutize nature and place it above the dignity of the human person... (n 463).

“A vision of the human person and things that is sundered from any reference to the transcendent has led to the rejection of the concept of creation and to the attribution of a completely independent existence to *human beings* and nature...The bonds that unite the world to God have...been broken. This rupture has also resulted in separating *human beings* from the world and, more radically, has impoverished *human beings*’ very identity. *They* find themselves thinking that they are foreign to the environmental context in which they live.

“The consequences resulting from this are all too clear: ‘it is the relationship *human beings* have with God that determines their relationship with *each other* and with their environment. This is why Christian culture has always recognized the creatures that surround *human beings* as also gifts of God to be nurtured and safeguarded with a sense of gratitude to the Creator. Benedictine and Franciscan spirituality in particular has witnessed to this sort of kinship of *human beings* with their creaturely environment, fostering in them an attitude of respect for every reality of the surrounding world’. There is a need to place ever greater emphasis on the intimate connection between environmental ecology and ‘*human ecology*’...Care for the environment represents a challenge for all of humanity. It is a matter of a common and universal duty, that of respecting a common good (n464, 466).

“The attitude that must characterize the way *human beings* act in relation to creation is essentially one of gratitude and appreciation; the world, in fact, reveals the mystery of God who created and sustains it. If the relationship with God is placed aside, nature is stripped of its profound meaning and impoverished. If on the other hand, nature is rediscovered in its creaturely dimension, channels of communication with it can be established; its rich and symbolic meaning can be understood, allowing us to enter into its realm of *mystery*. This realm opens the path of

human beings to God, Creator of heaven and earth. *The world presents itself before the eyes of human beings as evidence of God*, the place where his creative, providential and redemptive power unfolds. (n 487).

The Compendium reminds us that “the Magisterium has repeatedly emphasized that the Catholic Church is in no way opposed to progress, rather she considers ‘science and technology are a wonderful product of a God-given human creativity, since they have provided us with wonderful possibilities, and we all gratefully benefit from them’” (n457).

However, while advances in science and technology have benefited humanity, they have also caused/contributed to some harmful effects such as climate change, global warming, the depletion of the ozone layer, desertification, deforestation, the extinction of species, the generation and disposal of toxic and nuclear waste. Inter alia, pollution of the environment and the overuse of resources, particularly non-renewable resources, have serious consequences for people’s health and well-being and for our home, Planet Earth.

Pope Benedict XVI’s call for us to act to protect the Environment:

“*Our earth speaks to us, and we must listen if we want to survive.*” (Pope Benedict XVI , 24 July 2007)

Articles 48 – 51 of Pope Benedict XVI’s third encyclical, *Charity in Truth* (2009), focus specifically on environmental issues. The Pope reminds us that:

“The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole. When nature, including the human being, is viewed as the result of mere chance or evolutionary determinism, our sense of responsibility wanes.

“In nature, the believer recognizes the wonderful result of God's creative activity, which we may use responsibly to satisfy our legitimate needs, material or otherwise, while respecting the intrinsic balance of creation. If this vision is lost, we end up either considering nature an untouchable taboo or, on the contrary, abusing it. Neither attitude is consonant with the Christian vision of nature as the fruit of God's creation.” (48).

The Holy Father said in his 2010 World Day of Peace Message entitled: *If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation*:

"The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life, in order to protect earth, water and air as gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone, and above all to save mankind from the danger of self-destruction...when ‘human ecology’ is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits”. Young people cannot be asked to respect the environment if they are not helped, within families and society as a whole, to respect themselves.

“The book of nature is one and indivisible; it includes not only the environment but also individual, family and social ethics. Our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person, considered both individually and in relation to others...The quest for peace by people of good will surely would become easier if all acknowledge the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the whole of creation.” (12,14)).

He says: “We cannot remain indifferent to what is happening around us; for the deterioration of any one part of the planet affects us all...integral human development is closely linked to the obligations which flow from *man’s relationship with the natural environment*...Our present crises – be they economic, food-related, environmental or social – are ultimately also **moral** crises and all of them are interrelated.” Here the Pope echoes Pope John Paul II’s 1990 statement referred to earlier, that “the ecological crisis is a moral issue.”

The Holy Father poses some pertinent questions which we should all address:

“Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of “environmental refugees,” people who are forced by the degradation of their natural habitat to forsake it – and often their possessions as well – in order to face the dangers and uncertainties of forced displacement? Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources?”

He says: “It is becoming more and more evident that the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle and the prevailing models of consumption and production, which are often unsustainable from a social, environmental and even economic point of view...

“Protecting the natural environment in order to build a world of peace is thus a duty incumbent upon each and all. It is an urgent challenge, one to be faced with renewed and concerted commitment; it is also a providential opportunity to hand down to coming generations the prospect of a better future for all.”

Solidarity with Creation

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace, stresses that “solidarity” is the key word linking the Pope’s Encyclical, “Charity in Truth”, and his 2010 World Day of Peace Message which links care for the environment with peace.

Cardinal Turkson says: “Hitherto it has been common to refer to *human beings’* sense of stewardship of creation -- that has been the religious, theological way of presenting it. Now it is ‘solidarity’: that our life on earth depends as much on the earth as our life on the earth depends on us. So it’s like a symbiotic type of relationship which we need to appreciate more now than we’ve ever done.”

Planet Earth, our home/Pope Paul VI: man's ill-considered exploitation of nature

“Though there are diverse human cultures, customs, languages, political traditions and practices, all humans are related to each other and dependent on Earth. We stand with others of good will ready to make decisions to serve the good of our one common humanity and the best interest of Earth, mindful of its need to rest, regenerate and repair.” (Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns: Global economy imperils Earth, humanity).

Humankind's lack of understanding of the interdependence of creation has led to conflict between the environment as 'resource' and the environment as 'home'. In 1971 Pope Paul VI stated:

“Human beings are suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature they risk destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation. Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace -- pollution and refuse, new illness and absolute destructive capacity -- but the human framework is no longer under the control of human beings, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable. This is a wide-ranging social problem which concerns the entire human family.”

2 key Pastoral Letters from Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference

To help us implement Synod Resolutions, it is essential that we develop our awareness of Catholic teaching on issues relating to the environment – from a Caribbean perspective also. Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference have issued 2 key Pastoral Letters in 2003 and 2005: *“Stewardship and the revitalization of parish life in the Caribbean”* and *“Caring for the Earth – Our responsibility.”* The Bishops recognize that “stewardship” is a wider concept than using time, talent and treasure to build up parish communities. They said:

“The truth is that all human beings are called to be stewards, stewards of God's gift of creation, the primary sacrament of His love. To thankfully take responsibility for the integrity of creation is an important part of what it means to be made in God's image (Genesis 1, especially 26-31). We constantly need to be reminded, and to proclaim to the world: ‘The earth and its fullness belong to the Lord, the world and all that dwell in it.’ (Psalm 24:1) We are all in the world not as owners but as tenants and stewards...God is sovereign of all that exists and has instilled in every creature, including humans, laws and purposes which must be observed.”

C. The Archdiocese's Mission and Synod Resolutions on the Environment

There is an urgent need for us to read the signs of the times and reconcile ourselves with creation. It is for this reason that the **Archdiocese's Mission Statement** adopted at the 3rd sitting of Synod in 2009 is all inclusive:

“We are the people of God in Trinidad and Tobago, building the Civilization of Love - reconciliation with God, neighbour, **creation** and self - through:

- The New Evangelization
- Revitalizing Catholic Culture and Identity
- Regenerating the Moral and Spiritual Values of our Society.”

CCSJ is working with other Archdiocesan Departments and parishes to implement Synod Resolutions, for example,

- Resolution #3a states:

“The Archdiocese to dedicate a week every year to the theme of ‘Respect for Life’”. It is important to note that the call to respect life is a call to respect **ALL** of creation.

- Resolution #6 states :

“Be it resolved that in keeping with the Catholic position on Creation, our families, schools and parishes recognize our responsibility as stewards of Creation and express this in relevant tangible ways.

Res: 6:1: The Archdiocese to formulate a policy and guidelines on environmental awareness;

Res: 6:3: Organize/encourage participation in events that promote good stewardship of God's creation e.g. turtle watching, reforestation/replanting of trees, beach cleanup etc.

Res: 6:4 The Archdiocese to take action to promote the Church as a ‘green’ Church, for example, by raising awareness of how our daily choices affect the environment; encouraging the faithful to avoid being wasteful, to re-use items where necessary, and to recycle.

Res: 6:5: Establish an agricultural programme in Catholic Schools and parishes

Identify one or two Parishes that will be willing to establish an agricultural project.”

D. Putting our faith into action to restore right relationships between humankind and creation: (reflection/action process)

“The social message of the Gospel must not be considered a theory, but above all else a basis and a motivation for action.” (Pope John Paul II wrote in *The Hundredth Year*, 1991).

Let us stand in solidarity/ reconcile ourselves with God’s creation. Moving from beliefs to action is a fundamental requirement of our faith. If we are to address local and global environmental challenges, we need to take action where we are, for example, in our parishes, schools, work environment, and communities.

See, Judge, Act Process: The **SEE, JUDGE/REFLECT, ACT PROCESS** is intended as a guide for decision-making about current social issues. It is a very traditional Catholic method initially promoted by a Belgian priest, Fr. Cardijn prior to World War II.

The key elements of the process are:

- **Observe** – Seeing, hearing and experiencing the lived reality of individuals and communities and carefully examining the primary data of the situation.
- **Judge/Reflect** – This is the heart of the process and it involves two key parts.
 - Social Analysis – Obtaining a complete picture of the situation by exploring its historical and structural relationships. E.g. Why are things the way they are? What are the root causes?
 - Theological Reflection – Analysing the experience in the light of scripture and the Catholic Social Tradition.
- **Act** – Planning and carrying out actions aimed at transforming the social structures that contribute to injustice – including injustice against the environment.

Further information on the process can be obtained from the website of the *Office of Social Justice, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, USA*. Hard copies are also available from CCSJ’s Office at Archbishop’s House.

Helpful framework: US Bishops’ Pastoral Statement: Renewing the Earth

The US Bishops 1991 Pastoral Statement: *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching* provides a helpful framework for parishes, schools and communities. The goals of the Statement are:

1. “to highlight the ethical dimensions of the environmental crisis;
2. to link questions of ecology and poverty, environment and development;

3. to stand with working men and women and poor and disadvantaged persons, whose lives are often impacted by ecological abuse and tradeoffs between environment and development;
4. to promote a vision of a just and sustainable world community;
5. to invite the Catholic community and men and women of good will to reflect more deeply on the religious dimensions of this topic; and
6. to begin a broader conversation on the potential contribution of the Church to environmental questions.”

As the US Bishops state: “The web of life is one. Our mistreatment of the natural world diminishes our own dignity and sacredness, not only because we are destroying resources that future generations of humans need, but because we are engaging in actions that contradict what it means to be human. Our tradition calls us to protect the life and dignity of the human person, and it is increasingly clear that this task cannot be separated from the care and defense of all of creation.”

Seven themes of ecological responsibility

In their Statement the US Bishops propose 7 themes of ecological responsibility. These themes, which are drawn from Catholic social teaching, are useful for “religious teaching and moral debate” (Bishops of New Mexico):

- *“a God-centered and sacramental view of the universe, which grounds human accountability for the fate of the earth;*
- *a consistent respect for human life, which extends to respect for all creation;*
- *a worldview affirming the ethical significance of global interdependence and the common good;*
- *an ethics of solidarity promoting cooperation and a just structure of sharing in the world community;*
- *an understanding of the universal purpose of created things, which requires equitable use of the earth's resources;*
- *an option for the poor, which gives passion to the quest for an equitable and sustainable world;*
- *a conception of authentic development, which offers a direction for progress that respects human dignity and the limits of material growth.”*

E. Some environmental issues in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T)

“We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future...We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.” (*Earth Charter*)

Promotion of Biodiversity and eco-tourism

We are blessed in T&T with rich biological diversity but we must do more to conserve it. The United Nation has declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity. Inter alia, the aim is to educate and to raise public awareness of the reasons for conserving biodiversity. During 2010 the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) in T&T will organize a number of activities and programmes to “enhance public education and awareness and to promote the protection of biodiversity.” The EMA states in its 2010 Calendar:

“Biodiversity is the foundation upon which all human life is maintained. Yet, biodiversity loss is occurring at a rapid rate. Over the past 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems faster and more extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history. Species are going extinct at 1,000 times the rates typical of Earth’s past.”

As part of T&T’s plan to develop tourism T&T is promoting eco-tourism. Yet some areas of our environment are under threat.

Threats to T&T’s environment

Each year we see the ways in which ecological destruction impacts on us and on our lives. We must play our part to address environmental issues in T&T also, for example:

oil pollution of beaches; water pollution from effluents such as agricultural chemicals, industrial wastes, and raw sewage; deforestation; soil erosion; flooding caused in part by the littering of our waterways; destruction of our mangroves, wetlands and coral reefs; illegal forestry and quarrying; unsustainable hunting; and unplanned construction.

“An increase in the unmanaged development of hillsides is causing environmental, social and economic problems in Trinidad and Tobago. Improved environmental awareness and deepening environmental concerns in recent years have focused attention on the need to move towards a more sustainable pattern of development.” (Baban, SMJ, Thomas, D, Canisius, F & Sant, KJ 2007, 'Managing development in the hillsides of Trinidad and Tobago using geoinformatics', *Sustainable Development*).

“Slash and Burn” (cutting down and burning trees in order to clear land for temporary agriculture) which is practised in T&T as a method of farming, can harm biodiversity, pollute the

air and make the ground infertile. “Forest fires have taken their toll on Trinidad’s forests, especially on the slopes and ridges of the Northern Range. Most are the products of ‘slash and burn’ agriculture, which has consequently led to large areas of secondary growth forest... Mining which results in a loss of topsoil, vegetation and fauna is of particular environmental concern.” (The Encyclopaedia of Earth: www.eoearth.org/article/Trinidad_and_Tobago_dry_forests).

Some endangered species in T&T

While T&T is blessed with a wide range of flora, fauna and wildlife, there are a number of endangered species in T&T, for example, the gentle manatee. The Encyclopedia of the Nations states:

“On the west coast of Trinidad is the Caroni Bird Sanctuary, famed for its marshland and mangroves, where flocks of scarlet ibis roost. Little Tobago is reputed to be the only place aside from New Guinea where the bird of paradise lives in the wild. Endangered species on Trinidad include the Trinidad piping guan, tundra peregrine falcon, loggerhead turtle, and red siskin.”

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in T&T

The United Nations Development Programme (www.undp.org.tt/environment/index.html), working in T&T, says: “From reforestation to ecological crop management, the environmental assistance needed in Trinidad and Tobago spans far and wide.... *The tranquility of Trinidad's Northern Range and North Coast belies problems of watershed degradation, coastal erosion and pollution which are typical of many Small Island Developing States.*”

UNDP has identified the following areas for development in T&T:

“ Energy Security through the development of alternative energy sources.
Environmental sustainability and Waste Management.
Branding Tobago as a "green space" in support of sustainable tourism development.
Enhancement of the urban environment of Trinidad and Tobago.

“Follow-up to international commitments: The environment programme focuses on UNDP’s support in enabling Trinidad and Tobago to meet its obligations under the multilateral conventions for sustainable environmental management.

“In this regard, several projects are currently funded under the Global Environment Fund focal areas: Climate Change, Sustainable Land Management, Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants, Reduction of ozone depleting substances, The sustainable management of coastal zone areas...In addition to meeting its international obligations, priority needs to be given on national issues such as solid waste management, and the loss of green spaces.”

International agreements to protect our environment

T&T has signed a number of international agreements e.g. in relation to Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Marine Dumping, Wetlands, Ozone Layer Protection, Tropical Timber, Biodiversity, Climate Change. Not all of these agreements have been ratified by T&T. Even where there has been ratification and pieces of legislation to protect our environment have been enacted, implementation remains a challenge. Ecological conversion of the hearts and minds of our people will make “policing” of legislation unnecessary. Let us work and pray to achieve this goal.

T&T’s Environmental Policy and environmental protection initiatives.

The Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment has key responsibility for promoting initiatives to protect the environment. There is a Revised National Environmental Policy in T&T. Environmental protection initiatives outlined by T&T’s Government in the 2009/2010 Budget include:

- “ 1. Developing and maintaining a National Waste Inventory for T&T. This project will collect information on the generation, movement and disposal of hazardous wastes and enable the Government to better inform the development of national policy.
2. Reforestation efforts on the Sustainable Community Reforestation Initiative in St Ann’s.
3. Construction of the Integrated Biological Waste Collection facility in 2010.
The design of this facility will be informed by a biomedical waste study, which is in its final phase.
4. Continuation of the Nariva Swamp Reforestation and Carbon Sequestration Initiative.
This will protect the wetlands in the Nariva Swamp, reduce the incidence of forest fires, aid in the reduction of greenhouse gases and conserve endemic species.
5. Acceleration of the national Drainage Development Study which is consistent with the Government’s objective to develop drainage systems to meet ecological requirements and settlement patterns. Studies are being done in areas that include Ortoire, North and South Oropouche Basins, Port-of-Spain and environs. Also coastal areas like Matelot, Grand Riviere, San Souci and Toco.”

The challenge for us is to identify local environmental issues and address these. We can all play our part, for example, by doing what we can to stop polluting our air, water and land and reduce our carbon footprint.

Environmental Performance Index (EPI)

There is a need for us as a nation to improve our position on the Environmental Performance Index (EPI). 2010 EPI figures show that T&T ranks 103 out of 163 countries “on 25 performance indicators tracked across ten policy categories covering both environmental public

health and ecosystem vitality. These indicators provide a gauge at a national government scale of how close countries are to established environmental policy goals.” The Average EPI Score for the Americas was 64. The Score for T&T was: 54.2. (<http://epi.yale.edu/>).

As we seek to achieve developed nation status in T&T we must bear in mind that “Environment and development are not separate challenges; they are inexorably linked. Development cannot subsist upon a deteriorating environmental resource base; the environment cannot be protected when growth leaves out of account the costs of environmental destruction” (The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), 1987).

F. Action to achieve reconciliation with God’s Creation:

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth. Psalm 104:30

This policy urges each person to commit himself/herself to stand in solidarity with God’s creation. Together, let us meet the challenge of putting our faith into action. In their 2002 Statement: *A New Earth: The Environmental Challenge*, the Australian Bishops said: “The Church hears the cries of the poor and the groans of the earth. It seeks to stand in solidarity with the poor and the marginalised, and to exercise good stewardship of the fragile ecosystems that support life on earth. Every day more Christians are becoming aware of their responsibilities as people of faith towards God’s Creation.”

The following tips, which are not exhaustive, should assist us as we seek to reconcile ourselves with God’s Creation:

- **Read, Pray, Reflect on the story of Creation in Genesis.**

To develop an environmental spirituality, see the references in the supporting document to this draft framework. As individuals or in study/prayer groups/parish groups, pray for a conversion of heart – what Pope John Paul II called an “ecological conversion”.

- **Look around, discover and reflect on the beauty of God’s creation and of our connection to it – locally and globally.**

‘Ever since the creation of the world, God’s eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been seen through the things God has made’ (Romans 1:20).

In his 1990 Message for World Day of Peace, Pope John Paul II wrote: “Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power; contemplation of its magnificence imparts peace and serenity”.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (www.maryknollogc.org) states that:

“...we must learn again to love this Earth, to take time to be present to the beauty and mystery of the planet that is our home. It is within this amazing but damaged biosphere that we live and move and have our being. We cannot destroy it without destroying the life it holds within it. Contemplation of the sacredness of Earth is one step towards changing our presence from threat to healing... sharing our concerns, reflections, and actions with others can help move our consciousness to a more integrated way of understanding the natural world as we work to reframe our traditional Catholic Social Teaching within the perspective of this Earth that is our home”

The following verse taken from Marjorie Padmore’s song, “God bless our Nation,” is useful for reflection on the natural gifts that God has bestowed upon us in Trinidad and Tobago:

“God bless our isles of tropic beauty rare
Of flaming poinciana
And shady immortelle
The warm and sparkling waters
That beat upon our shores
Beat out a tune that seem to tell
We take a pride in Our Liberty.”

Reflect also on the line in T&T’s National Anthem: “...this our native land, we pledge our lives to thee...”

- **Learn about and educate others on the causes and effects of environmental degradation and about action that can be taken to promote the integrity of creation and to reconcile ourselves with God’s creation.**

If we are to achieve the Mission of the Church, environmental justice must become an integral part of our lives as Catholics. Only then can we play our part in building a just, sustainable and peaceful world. However, we can only develop a spirituality of justice and ethical relationships with Creation if we educate ourselves about environmental issues. We must also pray for God’s grace and guidance so that we will act in accordance with His will and be good stewards of His Creation – meeting our own needs while “preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for future generations.” (Sustainable Development – Brundtland Commission (1983))

The Australian Catholic Bishops’ said in their document, *Common Wealth for the Common Good*: “In a sense sustainability is good stewardship through time and in effect a matter of intergenerational justice. It means that the Earth’s resources are to be used with future needs in mind.” (1992).

- **Examine and assess your lifestyle and consumption. Pledge to make changes that will improve the ways in which you impact on and interact with the environment.**

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“Our present crises...require us to rethink the path which we are travelling together. Specifically they call for a lifestyle marked by sobriety and solidarity. (Pope Benedict XVI’s Peace Message, 2010)

In his 2010 New Years Day address to those gathered in St Peter’s Square, Pope Benedict XVI stated that “action at a personal and community level (is) ...important to safeguard the environment.” He underlined “the importance of the choices of individuals, families and local administrations in preserving the environment.” He urges us to adopt “sober and responsible lifestyles, above all towards the poor and future generations.”

In his sermon: “Enough for All” John 4:5-42, Rev. John McCullough said: “*The church cannot be oblivious to the situation, and her people too must engage in responsible behaviour. It is not enough for us to lift theological and moral platitudes, we need to also lead by example and put our faith into action in order to avert this existential threat to our children and grandchildren – it means that on a personal level I have to do even the simplest of things like driving less, turning off unnecessary lights, unplugging unused appliances, controlling waste, and adjusting thermostats according to season.... Reducing our carbon footprint, making our voices heard and our presence known, sharing the burden of the poor, and offering living water is worthy of the liturgies we profess... This not about some of us, it is about all of us.*”(www.maryknollogc.org)

Unless we change our mindset, we will not meet the various environmental challenges we face. There is much that each of us could do. For example,

- **Strive to Live Simply:**

In December 2009, Christian Leaders met in London, UK, prior to the Summit in Copenhagen on Climate Change. At the Service, Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, UK, urged Christians consider their own lifestyles when thinking about climate change. He said that people should “Live simply so that others may simply live and so that our planet may be cared for and not exploited. Of course we sense within us never-ending demands, often provoked by the culture of our consumer society. But we must look hard at the way we live our lives and consider again those whose future is threatened by the effects of our own lifestyles. Only when we are clearly prepared to change the way we live will politicians be able to achieve the change we say we want to see.”

- **Reuse, Recycle, Reduce, Restore. Practice these 4 R’s for sustainable living.**

As far as possible to buy products from recycled materials. See the Reference section for appropriate website links.

It is useful to reflect on the words of Pope John Paul 11. In Centesimus Annus he wrote: “It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed

to be better when it is directed towards “having” rather than “being,” and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself. (no.36)

- **Prevent Pollution and Reduce Your Carbon Footprint:**

The promotion of clean air, clean water and sustainable environments locally and globally is essential not only to reconcile ourselves with creation, but can also help to improve our quality of life and conditions that are linked to poverty. See reference section: The Archdiocese of Washington: Environmental Outreach Committee is promoting a *Lenten Carbon Fast for 2010*. Adapted from Tearfund (a development agency) and other sources: “40 carbon fasting actions everyone can consider as part of their Lenten preparation for the Easter season.” www.tearfund.org/carbonfast **and** catholicclimatecovenant.org/wp.../Lenten-Carbon-Fast-Calendar-2010.pdf

- **Become an Advocate for God’s Creation**

For example, meet/write letters to your MP/Local Government representatives; Mayors; Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment; Environmental Management Authority; Town and Country Planning; world leaders; and relevant individuals and organizations to address environmental concerns e.g. to protect and rejuvenate ecosystems and natural resources, to keep environmental issues on the ‘front burner’ e.g. in relation to action to address climate change, reduction in carbon emissions, the use of renewable energy, pollution – including noise pollution.

Collaborate with, for example, other Non-Governmental Organisations, Community Based Organisations, and Faith Based Organisations to address environmental concerns. For example, we need to encourage our Politicians to take action to produce policies that will promote authentic human/ecological development which should include a move towards alternative/renewable energy sources. “Renewable energy is energy generated from natural resources such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides, and geothermal heat, which are renewable (naturally replenished)”: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renewable_energy.

Our oil and gas resources in T&T are finite. Also, we should develop our awareness of the dangers of fossil fuel consumption. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions released into the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas, pollute our air, water and land.

The Florida Bishops said in their 1991 Statement, *Companions in Creation*: “To proclaim and demonstrate the value of environmental responsibilities, we are all called on to act...Because of the nature of many environmental problems, corrections will often require governmental action. Political action, therefore, is necessary. We urge all Catholics to use the democratic processes to make their representatives aware of

environmental problems and of their own concern and determination to see these problems corrected.”

Being an advocate for creation also involves standing in solidarity with those who are adversely affected by environmental degradation globally. Pope Benedict XVI said in his World Day of Peace Message (2007):

“If the protection of the environment involves costs, they should be justly distributed, taking due account of the different levels of development of various countries and the need for solidarity with future generations.”

- **Enjoy nature and live in harmony with it.** This is God’s plan for His Creation.
- **Evaluate the impact of your activities on the environment.**
See Catholic Earthcare Australia - <http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net/audit.html> - to find out how to conduct an environmental audit in your parish, home, school, and community;
- **Promote sound environmental management practices/best practice in ecological stewardship,** e.g. energy efficiency, water conservation, waste avoidance, composting, using environmentally responsible products, and car-pooling;
- Assist in implementing Synod Resolutions, for example Res: 6:3 : Organize/encourage participation in events that promote good stewardship of God’s creation e.g. turtle watching, reforestation/replanting of trees, beach cleanup etc. Organising/getting involved in clean-up activities and promoting anti-litter campaigns help to build pride in our communities and in our country.

In 2009 CCSJ organised turtle watching trips to Matura. A number of Confirmation Classes organised their own trips to Matura to watch leatherback turtles lay their eggs. This is one way of developing our awareness of the awesome nature of God’s gifts to us.

- **Consider establishing/supporting the establishment of an agricultural programme –** including compost making and tree planting, in your parish and your local Catholic primary and secondary school. Urban schools can use pots for planting if there is no green space around the schools. See the ‘Grow Box’ programme. It is important to promote food security in our homes, communities and throughout T&T. (see Synod Res. 6:5).
- Plan activities to mark World Environment Day on June 5 and the Archdiocese’s Respect for Life Week each year. (See www.unac.org for the dates of other UN Days related to the Environment. For example: World Water Day, World Meteorological Day, International Day for Biological Diversity, World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, World Maritime Day, World Habitat Day, International Day for preventing the exploitation of the

environment in war and armed conflict, International Mountain Day, Human Rights Day, International Migrants Day).

- **Schools and catechetical teams** should “Integrate into formal education and lifelong learning the knowledge, values and skills needed for a sustainable way of life” (Earth Charter). (These could also be promoted through non-formal education and youth work).

Environmental issues can be addressed in all areas of the curriculum. Activities could include: debating sessions, quizzes, poetry/essay writing, making/displaying posters, photographic exhibitions of the natural environment, agricultural projects (see ‘d’ above), field trips/eco-tours, and providing opportunities for students to practice the 4 Rs for sustainable living in their communities.

- As a key institution in the Archdiocese, the **Catholic Religious Education Development Institute (CREDI)** should promote environmental awareness among its students and encourage relevant research that will facilitate the mission of the church in its efforts to promote reconciliation with creation.

NB: Please note that the list above is intended to highlight key areas for action to demonstrate our solidarity with all of creation. You can add your own creative ideas.

G. Conclusion: Let us be transformed by God’s grace to a new humanity. May God bless our efforts. We close with a quotation from Pope Benedict XVI’s Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1 January, 2010:

“Protecting the natural environment in order to build a world of peace is thus a duty incumbent upon each and all. It is an urgent challenge, one to be faced with renewed and concerted commitment; it is also a providential opportunity to hand down to coming generations the prospect of a better future for all.

“May this be clear to world leaders and to those at every level who are concerned for the future of humanity: the protection of creation and peacemaking are profoundly linked! For this reason, I invite all believers to raise a fervent prayer to God, the all-powerful Creator and the Father of mercies, so that all *human beings* may take to heart the urgent appeal: *If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation.*”

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“Environmental pollution is making particularly unsustainable the lives of the poor of the world...we must pledge ourselves to take care of creation and to share its resources in solidarity.” (Pope Benedict XVI during his Angelus address on Sunday, Aug. 27, 2006).

“I/We Pledge to:

- **PRAY** and reflect on the duty to care for God’s Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.
-
- **LEARN** about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change.
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- **ASSESS** how we-as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations-contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc.
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- **ACT** to change our choices and behaviours to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change.
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- **ADVOCATE** for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable.”