

Good evening or good morning.

As you know I attended the conference of Jesuit parishes last June with Lucy and David, Andrew and Fr Griffiths.

Having not attended such a conference before I was not sure both of what to expect and what would be expected of me.

However, I found the conference a very informative and welcoming event. It was really good to be able to talk socially to people from other parishes and to have good discussions ranging over many aspects of parish life. I highly recommend attending future conferences to everyone.

I chose to take part in the group discussions on Laudato Si the encyclical on the environment - formally called - care in our common home. Laudato si means "praise be to you".

In the encyclical – Pope Francis writes
"all of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents".

There are six chapters to the encyclical which are briefly summarised as follows:

Chapter one deals with what is happening to our common home.

This dealt with how faith could bring new incentives to the world of which we are part. However, in reality and looking at the world today there is so much happening due to consumerism, technological advances, business and our own human intervention that our earth is being extensively damaged, perhaps irretrievably. The earth's beauty is being substituted by man-made creations.

Chapter two summary – the gospel of creation.

This section relates to how we look after the world and that just because although we were created in God's image, we are not God. The earth was here before us and we must reject any suggestion of our domination over other creatures.

We should take care of planet by only taking from the earth what we need to survive. We all have a duty to protect and sustain the earth for future generations.

Chapter three – the human roots of the ecological crisis.

This summarises the fact that the aims of science and technology may be unconsciously shaping the lives of us as individuals and also of society. We have to accept that such technological products do condition our lifestyle and also by shaping social possibilities along lines dictated by certain powerful groups.

Chapter four – integral ecology.

The message in this chapter is that we need to bring together different fields of knowledge, including economics to provide a better and more integral vision in our society. We cannot separate environmental problems from how we live and use our planet.

Chapter five – lines of approach and action

In essence this directs us to come up with a global plan of action (a common plan) in order to avoid the course of spiral of self-destruction which we as a planet seem to be locked into.

Such a plan is essential for us to actually confront the many problems throughout the world.

Chapter six –

Ecological education and spirituality.

The main and most important message in this chapter is that we humans need to change how we live. We all must accept the many challenges in order to move towards renewal and to maintain a healthy relationship with creation.

There was one phrase which stood out for me during the group discussions and which I think says very clearly what we need to do in order to sustain and protect our planet in every way.

This was “let us live simply so that others may simply live”.

There is an excellent short video made by the pope in February this year. It is called the pope video 2 – care for creation. I recommend this to you as it shows very vividly what this encyclical is about. Details of how to access this will be put in next week’s newsletter.

In order to bring this message to us all in more practical ways, both as a parish and in our own lives, there are some simple ecological initiatives that we could introduce.

It would be really helpful if initially we could form a “green group” within the parish in order to move forward on such things as

An eco-checkup of the parish,

Green tips in the newsletter,

Making available facilities to better recycle and and dispose of various items such as batteries, toner cartridges etc.

How can we involve our children in all these initiatives?

Volunteers to become part of the proposed green group would be very welcome. If you could contact Fr Griffiths or myself that would be very much appreciated. My contact details will be put in next week’s newsletter.

We all have a duty to look towards how we sustain and protect our world for the future and we should also remember to involve the younger generation in everything we do. Our children are ambassadors for the future and the planet.

If anyone would like a copy of the shorter versions of Laudato Si i have left some at the back of the church.

I would like to end with this simple prayer:

God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live.

The poor and the earth are crying out. O lord seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life, to prepare for a better future, for the coming of your kingdom of justice, peace, love and beauty.

Praise be with you.

Thank you.