



Catholic Earthcare Australia envisions an environment that is closer to the plan of the Creator.

1. Introduction

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, brings salvation not only to humankind, but also, in a different way, to the whole of creation.



In the letter to the Colossians we see that not only are all things created in Christ, but all things are reconciled in him:

"He is the image of the unseen God and the first born of all creation, for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible... Before anything was created, he existed, and he holds all things in unity". (Col. 1:15 - 17)

Sign of the Times

On 17 January 2001 during a general audience at the Vatican, Pope John Paul II , commenting on the environmental health of Earth, lamented that, "we immediately see that humanity has disappointed God's expectations ... degrading that 'flowerbed' which is the earth, our dwelling-place."

John Paul II, in calling the world's Catholics to a commitment to avoid ecological "catastrophe" emphasized that, "we must therefore stimulate and sustain the ecological conversion".

The Pope added, "at stake, then, is not only a 'physical' ecology that is concerned to safeguard the habitat of various living beings, but also a 'human' ecology which makes the existence of creatures more dignified, by protecting the fundamental good of life in all its manifestations and by preparing for future generations an environment closer to the plan of the Creator."



The Vision

This executive agency of the Bishops' Commission for Justice, Ecology and Development (BCJED) is mandated with the mission of advising, supporting and assisting the BCJED in responding to Pope John Paul II's call to "stimulate and sustain the ecological conversion" throughout the Catholic church in Australia and beyond.

Catholic Earthcare Australia, inspired by the words of John Paul I (in his 1990 World Day of Peace Message, "Peace with God, Peace with All of Creation" and General Audience Vatican Address of 17 January 2001) shares his vision of a world where we will:

- stimulate and sustain the ecological conversion;
- respect the central role of humankind in safeguarding creation;
- work towards making the life of all creatures more dignified;
- protect the radical goodness of life in all manifestations, especially human life;
- work for a sustainable ecology for present and future generations;
- discover the voice of the Creator transmitted in the natural world through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ;
- celebrate the community of life;
- strive for sustainable development that seeks to overcome poverty and injustice;
- prepare an environment for future generations that is closer to the plan of the Creator.

2. Mandate from the Australian Bishops

Tasks and Responsibilities

Catholic Earthcare Australia will act as an advisory agency to the BCJED on ecological matters, including the safeguarding of the integrity of creation, environmental justice and ecological sustainability.

Its tasks will include:

- carrying out research, from the perspective of scripture and the Church's environmental and social justice teachings;
- developing national networks, with a view to initiating, linking, resourcing and supporting ecological endeavours within the Church, and extending the hand of friendship and cooperation to other like-minded groups working in the broader community;
- undertaking initiatives by encouraging a reverence for creation, a responsible stewardship of Earth's natural resources and ecosystems, and providing a voice for the victims of pollution, environmental degradation and injustice;
- providing educational materials and services to Catholic schools, organisations, congregations and parishes - particularly information to assist in the carrying out of environmental audits and the implementation of more ecologically and ethically sustainable practices.

Function

Catholic Earthcare Australia will serve as an executive agency of the BCJED and in this capacity may function as a charitable incorporated body. The members of Catholic Earthcare Australia may establish and will supervise any committee, council, working group or foundation deemed necessary to advise and assist Catholic Earthcare Australia in its work and fundraising activities and may invite persons from outside the membership of Catholic Earthcare Australia to serve on such voluntary bodies.

Membership

Only members of the BCJED will be eligible for membership of Catholic Earthcare Australia. Catholic Earthcare Australia's membership will comprise of at least three bishops, one of whom will serve as chair and another as deputy chair. The Bishop-members will oversee Catholic Earthcare's activities, ensuring that its responsibilities are adequately fulfilled, and will supervise the work of the executive officer and of any commissioned advisers or advisory groups.