



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, December 17, 2023

Destruction of the Environment is an Offense against God

Pope Francis was not able to be at the international climate change conference (COP28) in Dubai due to health reasons, but he sent a letter which was read at the conference. Presented below are excerpts from that letter.

....”It has now become clear that the climate change presently taking place stems from the overheating of the planet, caused chiefly by the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere due to human activity, which in recent decades has proved unsustainable for the ecosystem. **The drive to produce and possess has become an obsession, resulting in an inordinate greed that has made the environment the object of unbridled exploitation.** The climate, run amok, is crying out to us to halt this illusion of omnipotence. Let us once more recognize our limits, with humility and courage, as the sole path to a life of authentic fulfillment....

We find ourselves facing firm and even inflexible positions calculated to protect income and business interests, at times justifying this on the basis of what was done in the past, and periodically shifting the responsibility to others. Yet the task to which we are called today is not about yesterday, but about tomorrow: a tomorrow that, whether we like it or not, will belong to everyone or else to no one....

It is up to this generation to heed the cry of peoples, the young and children, and to lay the foundations of a new multilateralism. Why not begin precisely from our common home? Climate change signals the need for political change. Let us emerge from the narrowness of self-interest and nationalism; these are approaches belonging to the past. Let us join in embracing an alternative vision: this will help to bring about an ecological conversion, for **‘there are no lasting changes without cultural changes’** (*Laudate Deum*, 70). In this regard, I would assure you of the commitment and support of the Catholic Church, which is deeply engaged in the work of education and of encouraging participation by all, as well as in promoting sound lifestyles, since all are responsible and the contribution of each is fundamental.

Brothers and sisters, it is essential that there be a breakthrough that is not a partial change of course, but rather a new way of making progress together. The fight against climate change began in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the 2015 Paris Agreement represented ‘a new beginning’ (*Laudate Deum*, 47). Now there is a need to set out anew. May this COP [Council of Parties] prove to be a turning point, demonstrating a clear and tangible political will that can lead to a **decisive acceleration of ecological transition through means that meet three requirements: they must be ‘efficient, obligatory and readily monitored’** (*Laudate Deum*, 59). **And achieved in four sectors: energy efficiency; renewable sources; the elimination of fossil fuels; and education in lifestyles that are less dependent on the latter....**

Let us leave behind our divisions and unite our forces! And with God’s help, let us emerge from the dark night of wars and environmental devastation in order to turn our common future into the dawn of a new and radiant day. Thank you.” (*America*, 12/2/23)