



Environment

“Look to the future with hope, and set out with renewed vigour to make this new millennium a time of solidarity and peace, of love for life and respect for God’s creation.”

– Pope John Paul II (May 8, 2001, Pilgrimage to Malta)

Our environment is our life source, without which we would not be here. Without air we would not breathe, without water we would thirst, without food we would go hungry. The environment gives us so much, but how much do we acknowledge this gift and how do we look after it so that it will never run out?

God gave us the responsibility to look after the environment and its creatures.



BOOKS AND STORIES

There are some great stories out there for people of all ages that highlight the need to share the earth’s resources.

‘If the World Were a Village’ by David J. Smith is an illustrated book outlining what the world would be like if it was reduced to the size of a village of 100 people. Based on 2008 statistics the book looks at nationalities, languages, ages, religions, food, air and water, schooling and literacy, money, possessions and electricity. This book is a great way to highlight and analyse global issues on a smaller scale.

The documentary ‘An Inconvenient Truth’ by former US Vice President Al Gore, looks at the reality of global warming and the need for governments to address this issue.

ACTIVITY 1

ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

Using Towards Environmental Futures, produced by Catholic Earthcare Australia, conduct an environmental audit of your classroom, home, or (as a class) the school.

- What is responsible for some of the greatest energy expenditure?
- What is the rubbish situation around your area?
- Is recycling used effectively or at all?
- What impact do you have on the environment?

Put together a list of recommendations that could help reduce the impact your school or family has on the surrounding environment.

Some suggestions could be building a worm farm, using recycled paper for printing, energy efficient lighting, turning off power points etc.

Visit the Flex your Power website for more tips on how to save energy at www.fypower.org. A copy of Towards Environmental Futures is available at www.catholicearthcare.org.au.



STEWARDSHIP

In Genesis 1, God created the world and everything in it. God made humans in his image and asked them to watch over his creation.

Stewardship means to be of service. The Catholic Church uses the word ‘stewardship’ to describe people doing acts of service for the Church

and its people. This could be looking after the gardens at the church or bringing the Eucharist to those who are too ill to make it to mass.

God asks us to be stewards of his creation. We are called to be of service to the planet, its creatures and each other.



■ KIRIBATI (KI-RA-BAS)

Kiribati is a group of 32 small islands in the Pacific Ocean that are in great danger from rising sea levels due to the melting ice caps.

According to 2005 Census data, there are over 92,000 people living on these islands. With rising sea levels it is likely that these people will lose their homes if we don't take action on global warming.

Larger countries have a responsibility to monitor and reduce their levels of pollution. The consequence of increasing global emissions, and their impact on global warming would

prove devastating for Kiribati. As one of the biggest polluters per head of population in the world, our actions here in Australia can impact on other countries, like Kiribati. So how can we help our neighbours?

Global warming has led to an increase in the average temperature of the Earth's surface. Scientists worry that communities and natural ecosystems might not be able to adapt to rapid climate change. An ecosystem comprises the living organisms and physical environment in a particular area.

Countries throughout the world drafted an agreement through the United Nations called the Kyoto Protocol to help limit global warming. Most climatologists have concluded that human activities are responsible for most of the warming. Human activities contribute to global warming by enhancing the earth's natural greenhouse effect. The greenhouse effect warms the earth's surface through a complex process involving sunlight, gases and particles in the atmosphere. Gases that trap heat in the atmosphere are known as greenhouse gases.

ACTIVITY 2

CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING YOUTUBE CLIPS:

1. Severn Cullis-Suzuki was a 12 yr old student who addressed the UN on the environment and its impact on her future. Find it on YouTube.

2. Flex Your Power UK ads - visit YouTube and search for Flex Your Power ads.

- What are the main themes from each of these clips?
- As a young person how can you make a difference?
- Do you think global warming is a fact or myth?
- What do you think the world will be like for your children? How does what we do today affect them in the future?

■ VINNIES GREEN TEAM

Vinnies GREEN TEAM is a group of young adult volunteers who provide gardening assistance for those who require help. They plant trees, mow lawns, water gardens and much more.

They also provide social support and friendship for those they assist and amongst the team. These young volunteers have found that they gained much more out of these projects than they initially expected.

■ WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

We can each be stewards of the earth and care for it like we care for our family and pets. We can give back what we take and tell others how they can help too.

If we all work together and remember to look after God's creation we will discover new and beautiful things, and we can make the world a better place.

Other ways you can help:

- Cut down on your consumption of energy and materials such as plastic.
- Research the facts and myths about the environment and what Australia is doing to look after it. Write a letter to the Prime Minister.
- Catch a bus, ride a bike or scooter or car pool to school/uni or work.

For more information

Below are a variety of different resources from Catholic Earthcare, YouTube and useful movies. These resources can be used for the classroom or at a Vinnies meeting.

Fresh water is sacred water CD-ROM www.catholicearthcare.org.au

National Wildlife Federation - Article on the effects of global warming on different animals. <http://www.nwf.org/Global-Warming.aspx>

The best resource, however, is getting out into the environment, exploring it yourself and admiring God's creation!