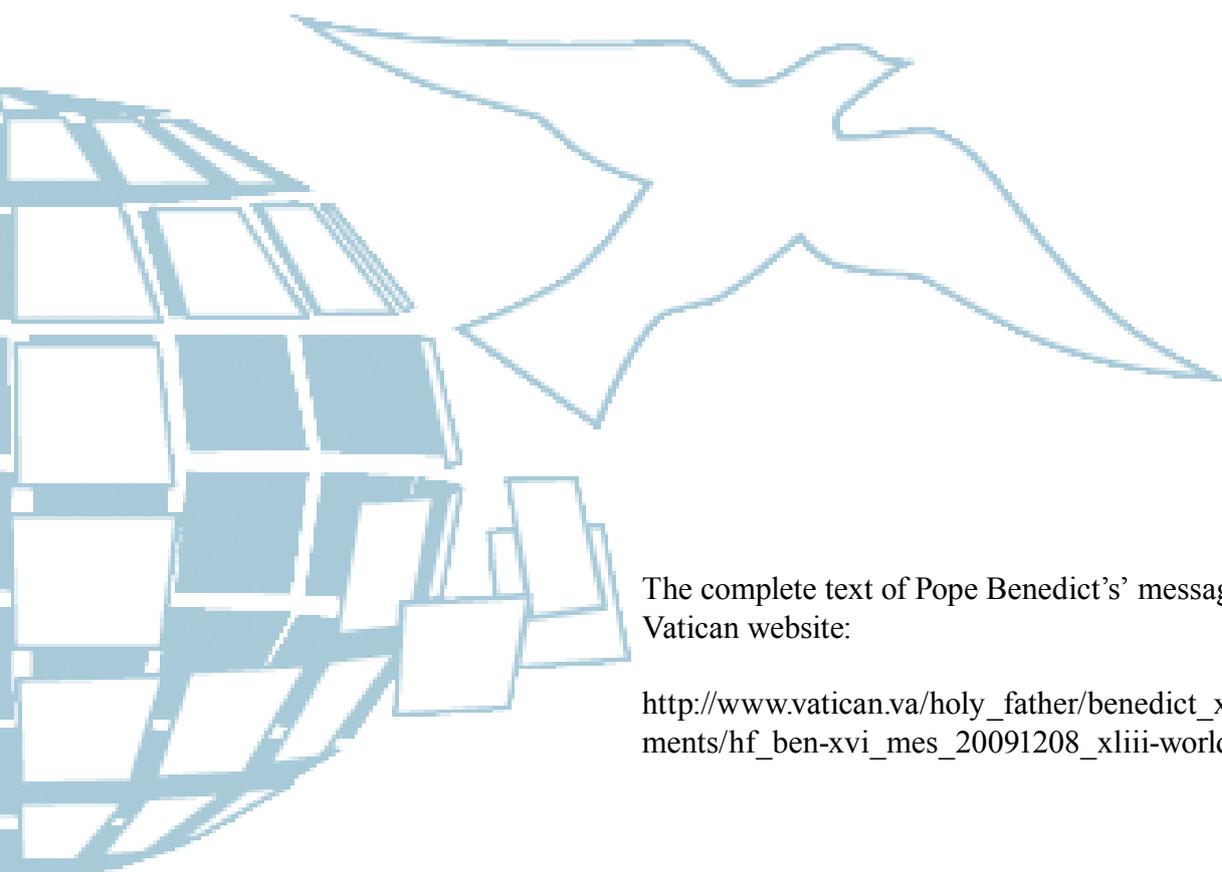


ACSJC Discussion Guide: World Day of Peace Message 2010

On New Year's Day, 2010, Pope Benedict XVI delivered his World Day of Peace Message. A papal message to Christians and all people of the world has been given each year since 1968.

The theme of Pope Benedict XVI's 2010 Message for Peace is: *If you Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation.*

Each year, the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council issues a brief discussion guide to help promote the message. This guide consists of a brief summary of the message, some points for reflection and discussion, and prayer.



The complete text of Pope Benedict's' message can be found at the Vatican website:

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliiii-world-day-peace_en.html

IF YOU WANT TO CULTIVATE PEACE, PROTECT CREATION

The World Day of Peace Message for 2010 draws together two major challenges facing the world at this time, both concerned with how we relate: the challenge of relating to one another in peace, and the challenge of relating with respect for all creation.

Respect for creation is of immense consequence, not least because 'creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God's works', and its preservation has now become essential for the pacific coexistence of mankind. (Par 1)

Creation is God's gift to all people and our use of it entails a shared responsibility for all humanity, especially the poor and future generations.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND THE EARTH

The Pope refers to his Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, in which he noted that human development is closely linked to the obligations which flow from human beings' relationship with the natural environment.

He also draws on previous Popes' writings on peace and ecology.

Twenty years ago, Pope John Paul II devoted his Message for the World Day of Peace to the theme: Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation. He emphasised our relationship, as God's creatures, with the universe all around us. 'In our day', he wrote, 'there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened ... also by a lack of due respect for nature'. He added that 'ecological awareness, rather than being downplayed, needs to be helped to develop and mature, and find fitting expression in concrete programmes and initiatives.' (Par. 3)

WE CANNOT REMAIN INDIFFERENT

In 1990 John Paul II spoke of an 'ecological crisis' which, because it is primarily ethical in character, points to the 'urgent moral need for a new solidarity'. Now, Pope Benedict reasserts this point and asks:

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? (Par 4)

Can we disregard the increasing phenomenon of people being forced to leave their homes because of the degradation of their land, or remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources?

All these issues impact on the exercise of basic human rights, such as the right to life, food, health and sustainable development. Everyone is affected.

ECOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT

The ecological crisis which threatens the very health of the planet itself cannot be viewed in isolation from the other crises facing humanity, whether social, economic or related to basic needs such as food and water.

Prudence would thus dictate a profound, long-term review of our model of development, one which would take into consideration the meaning of the economy and its goals with an eye to correcting its malfunctions and misapplications. (Par 5)

There needs to be a deeper understanding of humans' relationship with God, the earth and one another.

Humanity needs a profound cultural renewal; it needs to rediscover those values which can serve as the solid basis for building a brighter future for all. (Par 5)

INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Creation is a gift from God, and the goods it provides for our use belong to all humanity, present and future.

The goods of creation belong to humanity as a whole. Yet the current pace of environmental exploitation is seriously endangering the supply of certain natural resources not only for the present generation, but above all for generations yet to come. (Par 7)

Large numbers of people experience hardship because of the poor stewardship and excessive use of resources by a small number of people on the planet. A greater sense of international and intergenerational solidarity is needed.

To protect the environment, and to safeguard natural resources and the climate, there is a need to act in accordance with clearly-defined rules, also from the juridical and economic standpoint, while at the same time taking into due account the solidarity we owe to those living in the poorer areas of our world and to future generations. (Par 7)

PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Among the basic problems the international community faces is the development of sustainable energy resources for present and future generations.

This means that technologically advanced societies must be prepared to encourage more sober lifestyles, while reducing their energy consumption and improving efficiency. At the same time there is a need to encourage research into, and utilisation of, forms of energy with lower impact on the environment and 'a world-wide redistribution of energy resources, so that countries lacking those resources can have access to them'. (Par 9)

Human intelligence and ingenuity also needs to be applied for the good of all to sustainable management of water, food, forests and waste management. This will require a radical shift for those who have benefited from an unequal share of earth's riches.

There is a need, in effect, to move beyond a purely consumerist mentality in order to promote forms of agricultural and industrial production capable of respecting creation and satisfying the primary needs of all. The ecological problem must be dealt with not only because of the chilling prospects of environmental degradation on the horizon; the real motivation must be the quest for authentic world-wide solidarity inspired by the values of charity, justice and the common good. (Par 10)

FOR REFLECTION

The Book of Genesis, in its very first pages, points to the wise design of the cosmos: it comes forth from God's mind and finds its culmination in man and woman, made in the image and likeness of the Creator to 'fill the earth' and to 'have dominion over' it as 'stewards' of God himself (cf. Gen 1:28). (Par 6)

The relationship between God, human beings and the whole of creation is indivisible. How have you experienced the connection between cultivating peace and protecting creation?

FOR DISCUSSION

Humanity needs a profound cultural renewal; it needs to rediscover those values which can serve as the solid basis for building a brighter future for all. (Par 5)

What are these values? How do we develop and maintain these values: individually, as families, locally, nationally and globally?

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. (Par 14)

What efforts are needed by individuals, organisations, business and governments to respond to the ecological crisis?

RESOURCES

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference statement of 1 January 2010 on the Pope's message: <http://www.catholic.org.au/>

Catholic Earthcare Australia (CEA), the ecological agency of the Catholic Bishops of Australia: <http://www.catholicearthcare.org.au>.

Register your interest in CEA's sustainability initiative, ASSISI, for information and simple steps that individuals, schools, parishes, congregations, hospitals, universities, etc, can undertake: <http://www.catholicearthcare.org.au/assisi.html>

Edmund Rice Centre: <http://www.erc.org.au> . See Pacific Calling Partnership for information and suggestions for action for people of the Pacific Islands.

PRAYER

Creator God,
As we breathe the air that sustains us
And walk the common earth that unites us,
We remember your love, which gives life to all creation.
Rekindle in us your compassion for all you have made,
And our responsibility for its continued wellbeing.
Remove from our hearts apathy, selfishness and fear;
Animate the gifts of intelligence and creativity,
Given to us to use earth's gifts with care.
Open our hearts to solidarity with all who suffer now
because of our environmental irresponsibility.
Move us into action to save our earth
and to build your Kingdom
For all people
And for future generations. Amen.

building
social justice
networks

researching
policy

educating
on issues

presenting
Catholic teaching

promoting
a spirituality of
justice

advocating
change



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