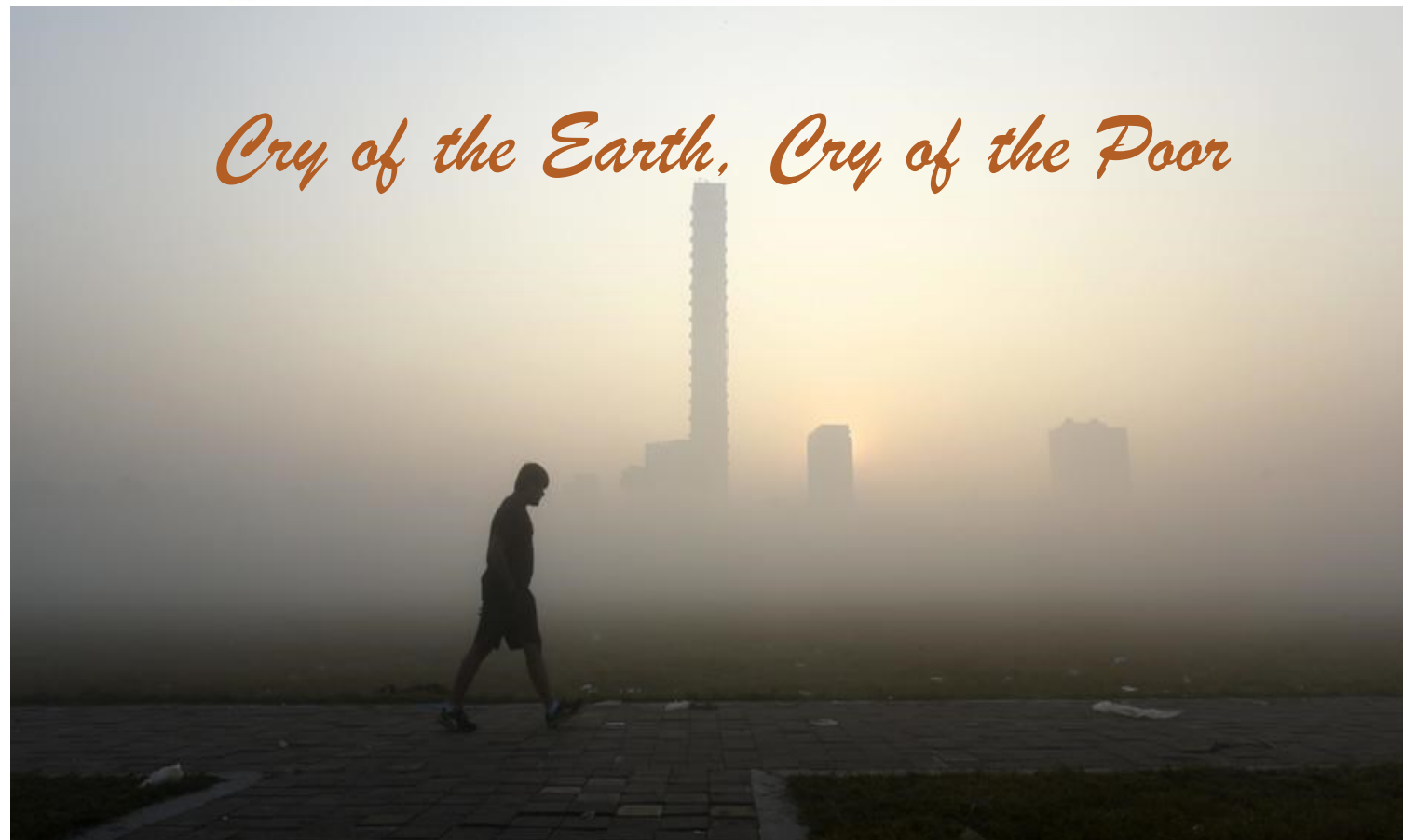


Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor



BISHOPS' SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement for 2021 - 22 will be launched on 5 August. The title, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* comes from *Laudato Si'*.

Today, however, we have to realise that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. #49

The Bishops invite the whole Catholic community to join them in taking up Pope Francis' invitation to a seven year journey towards total ecological sustainability, guided by seven *Laudato Si'* goals. The statement encourages families, parishes, dioceses and their agencies to: listen to First Nations peoples; reflect on the theological foundations offered in *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* and begin planning with the *Laudato Si'* goals.

HOMELESSNESS WEEK 1-7 AUGUST

The definition of homelessness is not restricted to those who are sleeping rough on the streets. There are thousands of people, including families with children who sleep in their cars, couch surf or use the services of community shelters. The organisers of the annual *Sydney*

Homeless Connect, know that there are many more people who are on the brink of living this way. The impact of covid is severe for those who are living on the brink of financial and family collapse.

In a recent policy paper, Catholic Social Services Australia recognises that 'the ongoing impact of the covid-19 pandemic has changed Australian society and its economy and will continue to shape our country into the future.'

INTERCONNECTED RELATIONSHIPS

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis makes many connections between exploitative industries, pollution, loss of biodiversity and the degradation of the earth and the ever increasing poverty of many people. Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ wrote in May 2020 that if the world continues to exploit the poor and destroy the earth, ultimately both rich and poor will suffer.

This has been driven home to us vividly through our experience of Coronavirus. One of the smallest and simplest organisms on earth grounded planes, emptied cities, crashed stock exchanges, broke economies and drove people out of work. It is likely that its origin lay in part in markets where impoverished farmers sold the meat of animals whose natural habitat had been destroyed.

ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis quotes from a World Day of Peace address given by Pope John Paul II in 1990:

If the simple fact of being human moves people to care for the environment of which they are a part, Christians in their turn "realise that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith". (*Pope John Paul II*) It is good for humanity and the world at large when we believers better recognise the ecological commitments which stem from our convictions.

Australian theologian, Fr Denis Edwards, wrote extensively on the meaning of an integral ecology before he died in 2019. In *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*, written in 2006 he wrote:

Conversion is central to Christian life. It is never something that is done. It always appears before us again as an invitation and a grace offered in the new circumstances that we face ...

The following of Jesus in the twenty first century will involve ongoing ecological conversion ...

The ecological conversion to which we are called involves a new way of seeing, thinking and acting ... the state of the planet is a challenge to a profound conversion that involves mind and heart, lifestyle and politics. (p 108)

Theologian Elizabeth Johnson CSJ in *Creation and the Cross* gives depth to the call for ecological conversion of heart and mind:

... the profound step of conversion to the earth as God's beloved creation. This is a turning that will impact our whole lives. It will expand our understanding of the God we are called to love with all our heart and soul, mind and strength, making clear that the Creator is also the Redeemer who accompanies the whole natural world with saving compassion. It will also expand the neighbour we are called to love as ourselves, since the beaten up traveller left by the side of the road whose wounds we must tend to includes needy and poor human beings along with natural ecosystems and all their creatures. Doctrine, ethics, and spirituality now become ecological as we deal with pressing human concerns in a broader planetary perspective. (pp 195-196)

The future comes from where we are now. The future won't change until we look thoughtfully at our present. We have sufficient human capacities - to think and reflect together, to care about one another, to act courageously, to reclaim the future.

Margaret Wheatley *Turning to One Another*

Let us pray to our compassionate God, who is our refuge and our strength.

For all who are affected by coronavirus, through illness or isolation or anxiety, that they may find relief and recovery: Lord, graciously hear us.

For those who are guiding our nation at this time, and shaping national policies, that they will make wise decisions: Lord, graciously hear us.

For doctors, nurses and epidemiologists, that through their skill and insights many will be protected: Lord, graciously hear us.

For the vulnerable and the fearful, for the gravely ill and the dying, that they may know your comfort and peace: Lord, graciously hear us.

For police and all essential service workers, who keep us safe in difficult circumstances, may they be blessed with courage and patience: Lord, graciously hear us.

For the health and well-being of our nation, that all who are fearful and anxious may be at peace and free from worry: Lord, graciously hear us.

For the isolated and housebound, that we will be alert to their needs, and care for them in their vulnerability: Lord, graciously hear us.

For our homes and families, our schools, teachers and young people, and all in any kind of need or distress: Lord, graciously hear us.

For a blessing on our local community, that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship, where all are known and cared for: Lord, graciously hear us.

Gracious and Loving God
You are our comforter and our hope.
Hear our prayers as we come before you.
Inspire us to acts of solidarity and generosity
and bless us with hope in a brighter future.
Amen