

A CALL TO ASSEMBLY '09

Issue 3
July 2009

“Christians in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty toward nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith”

Pope John Paul II

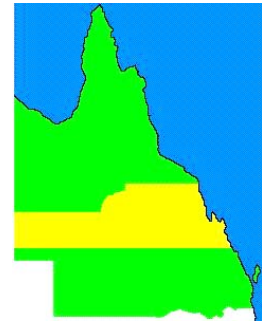
Bishop Brian invites us to prepare

This year's Assembly will be celebrated in the beautiful surrounds of St Brendan's College Yeppoon. Situated in a rural setting, yet not far from the sea, St Brendan's reminds us of the treasure God has entrusted to us, our incredible environment.

This paper invites us to reflect upon God's gift to us and find new appreciation of the wonders around us that we often take for granted. We are challenged to protect what we have been given and hand it on to future generations for their enjoyment.

Stewardship is a way of life which acknowledges God's gifts, develops them and shares them with others. As part of our diocesan journey into the future, may we take time out to literally 'smell the roses' and safeguard what has been given to us in God's wonderful world of creation

Brian Heenan
Bishop of Rockhampton



**Catholic
Diocese of
Rockhampton**

Assembly Prayer

“Loving God, we ask you to send your Holy Spirit to come upon us in new ways, as we prepare for our Diocesan Assembly 2009.

We pray that we may become the people you want us to be.

May our hopes and dreams be in harmony with your plans for our future.

Give us the privilege to proclaim your good news to all people and the courage to speak and act in your name.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.
St Joseph, Patron of our Diocese, pray for us.
Blessed Mary MacKillop, pray for us.*

Ecology

The Catholic Bishops of Queensland released a Pastoral Letter on the Great Barrier Reef in June, 2004. This document described Bishop Brian Heenan as the Bishop of Rockhampton and the Biogeographical Regions of the Mitchell Grass Downs, the Brigalow Belts, Desert Uplands, Central Mackay Coast and the Channel Country. This may, on first reading, seem to be a curious way to summarise the diocese. One implication arising from the description, is that our Bishop, as pastoral leader, has responsibility for, and to, the people and all of creation within the diocese. Is this taking the universal nature of what it means to be Catholic too far?

In the 1989 encyclical, *'Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation'*, Pope John Paul II highlights the connection between our faith and creation. 'Christians, in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation

and their duty toward nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith (paragraph 15)'. Indeed one can not profess to being a Christian, let alone a Catholic, and have little or no regard for the physical world around them. In the view of many of the scholars and saints of the Church, such as Saint Ignatius, Bonaventure, Hildegard, Thomas Aquinas and Francis, regarded creation as the primary revelation of God. Primary in this context refers to the first, given that a second source of revelation, namely the scriptures, were recorded relatively recently. For countless generations, the natural world was the prime manner through which God revealed God's self.

In the Spiritual Exercises (written in sixteenth century) Ignatius of Loyola wrote, 'Consider that God, your benefactor, is present in all creatures and in yourself. If you look at every step of the visible creation, in all you will meet God...God is in you; and, collecting all these degrees of being scattered through the rest of ...creation, God unites them in you.' Ignatius understood God as the One who



Remember to Pray

- ⌚ Set the alarm on your digital watch/mobile phone
- 📅 Mark the prayer time in your diary/computer calendar
- 🕒 Set your alarm clock at home for midday

Prayer Intentions

We pray that:

- 🙏 God will bless us with the eyes to see and the ears to hear the Word of God in our environment
- 🙏 We give honour to God by being responsible stewards of the Earth
- 🙏 God will bless us with a reverence for all creation



Prayer Resources @

<http://www.yenra.net/catholic/prayers/>

<http://www.pray-as-you-go.org>

<http://www.mercyworld.org/reflections/prayer/index.asp>

A CALL TO ASSEMBLY 2009

Ecology (continued)

gives life to the elements. God is present in the plants, giving them life, and in animals, giving them sensation.

The Greek language provides the root word 'oikos' for ecology. *Oikos* can be translated to mean 'household' with ecology holding the extended understanding of 'relationships within the household'. In His teaching, Jesus made reference to the householder on more than one occasion and used the image of the household to describe the dwelling place of God, 'there are many rooms in my Father's house' (John 14:2). Our contemporary experience of a household is vastly different to that which Jesus knew. The household in which Jesus grew up and participated in would have been a multi-generational household wherein the eldest male was the head of the household. Several small homes were clustered together around an enclosed courtyard. The families had a shared oven, a cistern of water (drawn from the village well) and a millstone for grinding grain. The household depended on the skills of the family members for their survival, to grow food in the courtyard, on the family garden plot and orchard, for building, sewing, spinning, weaving and raising of sheep. Each family was interdependent with other family units within the same house and with families within the village. Life in all aspects was shared.

The household of Jesus' time was a microcosm of the wider world. Through advances in science and knowledge we have come to appreciate the interconnectedness of life on Earth. Chaos theory tells us that the effects of a butterfly flapping its wings in China can be experienced in England... Those who have journeyed into space have returned with a new appreciation of the beauty, fragility and oneness of the Earth— country borders and state boundaries are not

visible. Gaia theory, popularised by John Lovelock, suggests that the Earth is one living being with its own systems for regulation and balance. For example, the level of salinity in the oceans remains relatively stable despite the inflow of fresh water.

We are in relationship with all that surrounds us. Humankind is one of the members of the earthly household. In the local context of the Diocese our household is one of great beauty and diversity. We are blessed to share the house with the residents of the Great Barrier Reef, flora and fauna of the plains and grasslands, the rugged sandstone cliffs and tablelands, bottle trees, wetlands, migrating whales and birds, rare ferns, sapphires, frogs, turtles, rivers, billabongs and creeks... Each species, rock formation and geographical feature is a voice of the Divine.

God of the Mitchell Grass Downs, the Brigalow Belts, the Desert Uplands, the Central Mackay, Capricorn and Curtis Coasts, and the Channel Country, we acknowledge you as Creator and sustainer of all life.

We thank you for your gift of creation and your call for us to be ecologically responsible in our care for one another and the environment.

Guide and inspire the members of the Rockhampton Catholic Diocese in ways that respect all life. Help us to be wise in determining how resources are shared.

We pray for our local communities as we enter this time of stewardship. Help us to recognise and share our gifts with others that we may be carers of creation and stewards of the Earth. AMEN

Rose Schick rsj and Mary-Ann Casanova rsj
on behalf of the Diocesan Commission for
Environmental Awareness (DCEA)

Everyday Ecological Tips

At Home

- Each day try to see the natural world with new eyes. Ask yourself, "What attribute of God does this reveal?"

At Work and School

- All creation is interconnected. Consider the ways in which the effects of your work and activities might flow on into the entire universe.

In Your Community

- Take some time to visit and appreciate your local public parks and beauty spots. Try to be aware of to the many voices of the Divine in your part of the Diocese.

Chat Points

- Recall your special places within the Diocese. What do they reveal to you about God?
- How does your parish include the natural environment in liturgy, and general parish life? What more could be done? How is faith and the care of the earth connected in your local parish or area?
- How might a concern for ecology connect with the diocesan focus on stewardship?
- What do you consider to be the role or relationship of the Bishop (the priest and the community of believers) to the people and all of creation within this Diocese?

July Diary

5 National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Sunday

5-12 NAIDOC Week

18-19 Ecological Conversion - A Biblical Imperative Middle Hall - Range
263 Agnes Street Rockhampton

29 National Tree Day

Download this and future issues of *A Call to Assembly*, along with other Diocesan Assembly 2009 materials from the diocesan website www.rock.catholic.net.au