



CatholicCare NT

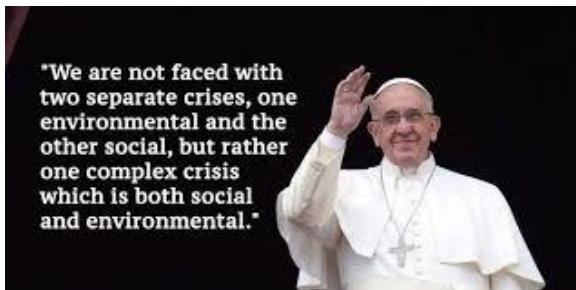
Stewardship of Creation - Caring for our Environment

Sr Leone Wittmack

Introduction

The values of CatholicCare NT have their foundation in the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching. The Principle of Stewardship of Creation and how we should care for the earth and the environment is reflected in all our Values of Respect, Honesty, Courage, Connection and Fairness.

We are encouraged by the Leadership of Pope Francis and the many references he has made to the important and devastating issues that Climate Change has on the environmental, health and social fabric of our global society. Pope Francis has made a social-justice oriented approach to climate change mitigation. His Encyclical "Laudato Si" was the second encyclical of Pope Francis. (An Encyclical is a type of letter written by the Pope of the time and concerns matters relating to Catholic teaching.) This Encyclical by Pope Francis has a subtitle "on care for our common home". In it, the Pope critiques consumerism and irresponsible development, laments environmental degradation and global warming, and calls all people of the world to take "swift and unified global action."



Global Response

In recent times, these grave concerns of Pope Francis have been witness by people power, in marches and strikes led by the youth of the world. They took their concerns to the United Nations through at the Youth Climate Action Summit. This brought young climate champions together from more than 140 countries and territories to share their concerns and solutions on a global stage, and delivered a very clear and loud message to world leaders. **We need to act now to address climate change.**

CatholicCare NT Response

Many of our staff are also looking at ways to care for the earth. The importance of Caring for Country has always been an important part of the lives of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. In the last two months our staff responded to the idea of taking our values of Respect and Connection with a particular focus on the environment and considering our responsibility to Care for the Earth or as the Pope expresses it as care for our earthly home- our common home. These reflections have encouraged our staff to look at ways that we can better care for our environment and their suggestions show their commitment to this very important issue.

In Berrimah at a recent site meeting, Climate Change was the focus of our reflection. Margi MacGregor led the reflection where Greta Thunberg's speech was shown and issues discussed included the Sydney and Darwin Climate Strike rallies, the fact that people who speak out to create change often are the brunt of personal criticism by peers, general public, government and corporate institutions. Later in the meeting Sister Leone suggested that CatholicCare NT develop a Climate Justice Group across all our sites which would work in conjunction with our Environment Committees.

At a local level the Berrimah staff agreed to look at all the things that can be recycled such as Toner Cartridges, batteries, biros, old spectacles, old CatholicCare T-Shirts and old mobile phones. Berrimah site would be a collection point for all of these items which can then be taken to recycling depots. Staff also suggested that we look at composting for the garden and that at our next meeting a representative from Northern Territory Recycling will be invited to be our guest speaker at our next site meeting.



In Alice Springs a great initiative came from our staff to contact the Alice Springs Town Council and ask if there was a possibility to do some tree planting. This was well received by the Alice Springs Town Council and we were given 20 trees to plant around the oval of the Charles Darwin University - Alice Springs campus. So on Friday the 18th October staff set off to the University where we met two of the Council workers and set about planting the trees around the University oval. We hope that in years to come these trees will have grown and provide the much needed shade as people play and watch sport around the oval. This was a great activity for the staff and getting our hands dirty for the environment was a great experience for all including the Council workers.



In Santa Teresa there was a great effort made by all the community including our CatholicCare staff to keep Santa Teresa clean and tidy. As a result of this, Santa Teresa was given the Tidy Towns Award. Our commitment to horticulture at Santa Teresa continues to grow. They welcomed and enjoyed a visit from Costa Georgiada from Gardening Australia and this was a highlight for the team. This gardening program at Santa Teresa gives gardening experience to many workers. They enjoy working around the community and with the knowledge they have gained together with their own experience of caring for country they help our earth and country to thrive.



Santa Teresa community members attending the garden in front of the grotto at Santa Teresa



Enjoying the cool of the plant nursery at Santa Teresa. This gardening program is led by our staff member Morna Flower.

In Katherine at our staff meeting, the staff reflected on the meaning of Stewardship of Creation and our values of respect and connection. In doing this they voiced their concerns and looked at how we can contribute further to caring for the environment. It must also be noted that in Katherine the people have been badly affected by Pfas contamination.

Some of their responses from their interesting conversation and debate included:

- General consensus that we often neglect environment factors/concerns and particularly in Katherine as we don't have any recycling facilities.
- Discussed carbon footprint and the complexity of our remoteness. For example; Reducing air travel and sourcing alternative options.
- Vegan Movement was raised as an example on the impact of environment v's human rights.
- Discussed the basic human right of having access to water and food and how that relates to climate change.
- Talked about triple bottom lines (social, financial and environmental). Example was given of a Factory. The factory may have a significant environmental impact but if you were to close the factory what is the impact going to be on the factory workers for in reality the majority of factory workers would be considered low-income earners and living in poverty. If you close the factory, they would lose their income it is likely to create social deprivation and poverty.
- With all of the examples they discussed, it come down to ethical or moral philosophical debates, utilitarianism, rights, casuist or virtue.
 - How do you choose?
 - Who has the power to choose?
 - What is right?
 - How do we know it is right?

This is especially difficult given most of the staff are driven by human rights and social justice but also see the environment as a priority. They recognised the fact that if we don't have a planet how can we have humans but then the counter conversation was that if addressing the environmental concern means that you are depriving people and limiting their ability to access basic human right.

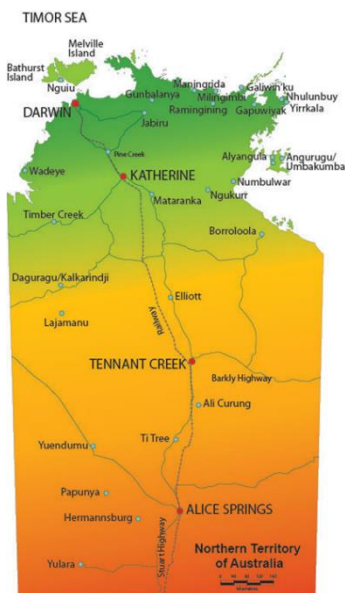
Agreed actions:

- Take printer cartridges to Australia Post as they are able to recycle them .
- Consciously try to reduce the amount of printing we do.
- Utilise the blue recycle bin in the Kitchen for bottles and cans. In addition to the environmental benefits, this has social and economic benefits as Kalano CDP participants take these and get 10 cents per bottle/can, and then put that money it make into buying supplies for more activities which in turn increases their opportunities to develop skills.

- CatholicCare NT Katherine Staff to travel by car to and from Darwin and Katherine and only fly in exceptional circumstances.
- Agreed that when appropriate we would address rubbish disposal with clients, particularly in relation to people leaving/dropping rubbish on the ground (this may be when they are on site or even in their own homes).



Organisational Level



At an organisational level CatholicCare NT has been involved in a combined Climate Justice Response to the NT Governments Strategy on Climate Change towards 2050. This response included other organisations such as Anglicare, NTCOSS, Jesuit Social Services. This joint Climate Justice Response was submitted to the NT Government on the 31st October.

CatholicCare NT also submitted our own response to the Government Strategy viewed from the perspective of a Catholic Social Service as we witness the effects of Climate Change in the communities where we offer our services.

With Pope Francis we reflect and pray:

Pope Francis visits Typhoon Yolanda victims on the island of Leyte, the Philippines.



Pope Francis visits Africa to discuss climate change, poverty and corruption.



At the start of his tour of Africa, the people hail the Pope as the Prophet of Reconciliation



We join Pope Francis and pray:

Let us pray that politicians, scientists and economists work together to protect the world's seas and oceans

Creator Spirit

Father of kindness

you created the world for us

and entrust your children with the stewardship of creation.

We ask your forgiveness

for not knowing how to take care of the beauty that has been entrusted to us

and using selfishly and unreflectively

the resources we possess.

We apologize for our lack of sensitivity and love

to nature and to your sons and daughters

who suffer the consequences of our bad choices.

Give us light to make decisions for the defence of the oceans,

doing everything in our power to make the Earth

the place of beauty that you dreamed for us.

