

# The Catholic Church and Climate Policy

Last week Faiths 4 Climate Justice events were organised by the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change. It sent a message to Prime Minister Morrison that diverse faith communities want him to take a strong climate policy platform to the United Nations climate summit in Glasgow, which will run from October 31 to November 12.

Fr Robert Riedling, Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Parramatta, said while much is being made about net zero emissions by 2050, organisers are calling for targets by 2030.

"The Catholic Church has an evolved tradition of social justice. We know that those most affected by climate change tend to be the marginalised and disenfranchised, so we as a Church, along with other churches and other faith traditions, are hoping that we can highlight what needs to be done and demand that the Government takes action on this issue," Fr Riedling said.



The Sisters of St Joseph also called for Australia to make a commitment to "put the protection of the planet at the forefront of its decisions".

"How can we not take action?" asked congregational leader Sr Monica Cavanagh in a media statement. "The IPCC findings warn of a catastrophic future if we don't act. Our Pacific neighbours watch as their lands are disappearing. We know that it is those who are most defenceless who are most immediately affected by the devastation we are causing. Both our religious faith and the call to us as humans, propel us to do all we can to preserve the gift of creation."

## **God of life,**

you call us to be participants in the web and wellspring of life:

to be nurtured by the planet; to be nurturing of the planet; to cherish the world and all that lives.

But we have failed and creation groans under our weight.

## **God of grace,**

forgive us in our brokenness: when we have taken too much from the earth; when we have not spoken out against greed and destruction; when we have allowed our most vulnerable neighbours to be harmed.

We seek courage and forgiveness to be made whole.

## **God of love,**

we pray for those people, communities and nations already suffering the devastating effects of climate change; and we pray for the diversity of life on earth, so much of it already threatened by our actions.

## **God of hope,**

we pray for the members of parliament who receive our petition. Bless them with wisdom and creativity, and a shared vision of hope for all creation.

May they find the determination to take strong action to halt the destructive effects of climate change, and the political will to act together for the common good.

**Creator God,** we pray for us all, that we might restore our relationships with each other and work together to heal the earth.

Renew us in your grace for the sake of your creation.

Amen

## ON 'DYING' and 'DEATH'

*From an interview with Billy Graham (US evangelist – 130,000 went to the MCG to listen to him in 1959!)*

I see death as a 'change of address'.

I'm not looking forward to dying: I am looking forward to what it will be like when I am held by Christ in Resurrection. And I might finally know where there is such pain and suffering in life here, and why evil has such influence here.

This 'changing of address' will mean having to leave behind some very familiar parts of life that have shaped me, and being sad about that. And really looking forward to the new place and coming to be 'at home' there.

*From Banjo Patterson (writer of 'Waltzing Matilda')*

Child, you are wise in your simple trust,  
for the wise man knows no more than you.  
Ashes to ashes and dust to dust,  
our dreams by a range are bounded, too.  
But we know that God has this gift in store:  
that when we come to that final change  
we will meet with our loved ones gone before,  
in that beautiful country 'Over the Range'.

*From Robert Dessaix (Australian author)*

To talk about dying and being dead makes us so anxious, I think. No one minds talking about dying or being dead as a statistic, or quoting a poet or two or even Woody Allen, but no one much feels comfortable talking about dying or being dead when it's about themselves or someone close to them. I don't think there's any taboo on the subject: I just don't think people quite know what to say.

All the same, sometimes I bring the subject up myself. After all, unless you do consider it, how can you know how best to live now? Without thinking through what death means to you, aren't you walking backward towards a precipice? Much better, surely, to walk facing what's ahead, stepping forwards with care, judging your footing and pace.

*(Unknown)*

Death always startles us with its suddenness, its finality. Even when a loved one has been sick for a long time and death comes as a relief for both the sufferer and those left behind, the initial reaction is one of shock. In cases of sudden, accidental death, this reaction is magnified. We who believe in the Resurrection are no less likely to experience this human reaction.

We resonate with Mary's response to Jesus about her belief in the resurrection at the end of time. Our minds and our faith tell us one thing, but our hearts and our bodies often balk at the appearance of separation and loss that for a time is all too real and unavoidable. Like so much of our spiritual lives, we have to learn to live with this paradox.

We see it differently at different times of our life. When we're young, death is an infrequent and scary interruption of life. When we're old, we sometimes feel like we've seen too much death over the course of a long life, and it seems almost unbearable in its familiarity. The promise of resurrection at the heart of our faith allows us to celebrate our loved ones even in their passing, because we know that life, not death, is the final reality.

The final verso of St Francis' 'Canticle of the creatures' praises bodily death. Scholars tell us that Francis added these words shortly before his own death, after Brother Leo and Brother Angelo had sung the Canticle at his request. Thomas of Celano tells us that Francis' last words were: "Welcome, my Sister Death".