

# CARE FOR CREATION

## A Statement addressed to the People of God in the Diocese of Sandhurst

with the aim of encouraging a greater appreciation of Creation  
and a deeper understanding of our responsibility for its care.



Our world is beautiful and mysterious, inviting us to reflect with wonder and gratitude to God who loves it into existence. Every part of creation is connected in a flourishing web of life with delicately balanced biodiversity. Humans are part of nature, created in the image of God to live in this web of relationships, with God, each other, the earth and all creatures *Laudato Si* 139. In the rural Diocese of Sandhurst, communities are surrounded by a diversity of life and landscapes, experiencing God's blessings in unique and wonderful ways.



The goodness of God's work in the world is celebrated in Scriptures and the writings of great spiritual teachers. Our sacramental worldview recognises that we encounter God through creation. In his Cantic of Creation, St Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology, celebrated our kinship with all creatures and our sister, Mother Earth. Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that we are part of the created environment. We are called to live as responsible stewards of the earth, conscious that it was created for the 'common good'. We are called to understand that the ability of all, both present and future generations, to live with dignity, is intimately connected to our care for our common home. A truly Christian spirituality will be evident in lifestyles in which "the effects of our relationship with Jesus Christ become evident in our relationship with the world around us" *Laudato Si* 217.

The created world is in crisis. Human activity is damaging land, air, water, creatures and other humans, especially the most vulnerable. Biodiversity is diminished and the earth's resources are over-exploited. The world is polluted to the extent that many environments and their inhabitants are sickened and impoverished. The balance of nature is severely threatened. Critical environmental 'tipping points' are imminent.

In recent decades, Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis have each summoned us to a profound ecological and spiritual conversion. In his first encyclical, *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis called all people to work together to care for our common home. In particular, he invited Church communities to live a Christian spirituality of care for creation and simpler lifestyles, for "living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience" *Laudato Si* 216-217. Humanity must "hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" *Laudato Si* 49, to ensure a safe, fruitful, hospitable and sustainable world for all. In their 2002 statement "A New Earth: the environmental challenge", the Australian Bishops warned that "urgent action ... is necessary to protect our land, water and air" and "Individuals, community groups, governments at all levels, businesses and faith communities all have roles to play."



Our Sandhurst Diocese is a community whose members have valuable insights: first Australians, who have cared for the land through generations; older parishioners who lived simply and wasted little through difficult times; and young people and their families who are well informed and passionately committed to caring for the environment. Our rural parishes are used to engaging cooperatively with other community groups. With the worldwide Church, the Catholic Church in Sandhurst is called to show leadership through shared wisdom, responsible decision making, good practice in a context of prayer and a spirituality that knows "The entire material universe speaks of God's love ..." *Laudato Si* 84.

*"Ask the animals and they will teach you, or the birds of the air and they will tell you; speak to the earth and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you."* Job 12:7-8



# WHAT CAN WE DO?



## SUGGESTIONS FOR PARISH ACTION

### 1. Form a Parish 'Care for Creation' Team

### 2. Devise a Parish 'Care for Creation' Plan

- a. Prepare a Parish 'Care for Creation' Statement and Commitment
- b. Begin to form the hearts and minds of parishioners
- c. Conduct an Environmental Audit for the Parish
- d. Identify 'Care for Creation' priorities in consultation with parishioners.
- e. Develop an Action Plan - with Timeline and Steps for Action in areas such as:

Prayer and Worship  
Waste  
Energy and Transport  
Land and Buildings  
Water  
Community events

### 3. Implement the Parish Plan

### 4. Research and connect with local issues

e.g. adopt a project and work with the shire / sustainability groups / Landcare

### 5. Regularly Review and Evaluate Achievements.



**This statement was prepared by:** Cecilia Merrigan CSB, Chair, Lyn Breen, Adult Faith Education Sandhurst, Kerry Stone, Sandhurst Caritas/Justice (incorporating Catholic Earthcare) and Kylie Smith, Catholic Education Sandhurst, at the request of the Sandhurst Adult Faith Reference Group.

Pope Francis, "On Care for Our Common Home", *Laudato Si*, 2015 - Abbreviation LS)

Pope John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator: Peace With All of Creation*, 1990;

Pope John Paul II & Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, *Declaration on the Environment*, 2002.

Pope Benedict XVI "If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation", World Day of Peace Message, 2010.

Pope Francis, "On Care for Our Common Home", *Laudato Si*, 2015.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, *A New Earth: the environmental challenge*, 2002 Social Justice Sunday Statement, p. 11