

SUPPORT FOR POPE'S ENVIRONMENTAL MESSAGE

Parish Priest of St Mary's Parish, Swan Hill Fr Marcello Colasante has urged the Swan Hill community to embrace the Pope's new message on climate change, saying his call for environmental stewardship is one that farmers can resonate with.

In June 2015, Pope Francis released the first ever papal encyclical on climate change, inviting Catholic believers and all people of "good will" to reduce their impact on the global environment. "The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth," the Pope wrote in the first chapter of the encyclical. "A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of



the climatic system. If present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us."

Fr Colasante said the Pope's main message throughout the text was to highlight the relationship between a changing environment and the world's poor who were most at risk of experiencing its impacts.

"I think the Pope is also making the point that there needs to be a forthright and honest debate about what is happening to the environment and the impact that we as human beings are having on it," Fr Colasante said. "And about what strategies we might implement to move... into a different way of living that promotes stewardship for the whole of creation — for all of our resources — to ensure that, for example, everyone has access to clean, safe drinking water and clean air to breathe."

Fr Colasante said farming communities could easily relate to the Pope's message that humans have the responsibility to "till and keep the garden of the world". "I think the majority of farmers are doing their bit to be good stewards of the resources that are entrusted to their care — in other words, the land that they own or lease or cultivate to produce their own livelihood," he said.

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