

Newsletter of Ballarat Diocesan Ecological Sustainability Group



Global Catholic Climate Movement

November 2015 is a historical month to take action against climate change. On 30 November, 2015 world leaders will inaugurate the Parish Climate Summit (called COP21) and sign a treaty to tackle the climate crisis. Throughout November we will pray and mobilize as never before, to put into practice the Pope's *Laudato Si* message. To get started, the Bishops of the world released this "Appeal to the COP21 Negotiating Parties" <http://catholicclimatemovement.global/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/APPEAL-TO-COP-21engl-final-1.pdf> and the Global Catholic Climate Movement responded with a call to a month of climate action.

See more at: <https://catholicclimatemovement.global/month-climate-action/>

THE GLOBAL CATHOLIC CLIMATE MOVEMENT of which **CARITAS AUSTRALIA** and **CATHOLIC EARTHCARE** are members, **need your help urgently** leading to the United Nations Conference on Climate Change - COP21 in PARIS conference from 30th November to 11th December 2015.

Please sign the petition supporting the Pope's Ecological call at :

<https://catholicclimatemovement.global/petition/>

For further writings on *Laudato Si* and statements on Climate Change and Ecology see:

<https://catholicclimatemovement.global/encyclical-laudato-si-on-ecology-pope-francis/>

And join the world wide prayer chain: <http://catholicclimatemovement.global/pray4cop21/>

The conference is expected to **attract close to 50,000 participants including 25,000 official delegates** from government, intergovernmental organisations, UN agencies, NGOs and civil society.

<http://www.cop21.gouv.fr/en> (You can follow the talks on this website)

"There is a strong scientific consensus that **climate change is caused by human action and will very likely have catastrophic consequences if not tackled urgently** (and the poor will suffer the most). The world needs a fair, ambitious and legally binding global agreement in the COP21 summit at Paris to keep the global temperature increase below 1.5 degree Celsius (relative to pre-industrial levels).

The latest scientific findings are best summarized in the latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which is the internationally accepted authority on climate change scientific matters, operating in a peer-reviewed format and leveraging the inputs of thousands of scientists and other experts. **This report was explicitly supported by several Vatican statements**, such as the ones by the Holy See delegation at the UNFCCC, by the Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Social Sciences, and by the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.”

- See more at: <https://catholicclimatemovement.global/climate-change-facts/#sthash.LTytlLuO.dpuf>

The Sustainable Innovation Forum Dec 7-8th 2015 is convening in conjunction with the Climate talks, looking at sustainable futures. The agenda and speakers are can be found at the website:

<http://www.cop21paris.org/>

Ross Gittins, Economics Editor Sydney Morning Herald, has on Saturday 7th November 2015 written an article [“CSIRO fills Treasury's gap on environment modelling”](#) looking at the scenarios modelled by the CSIRO for a sustainable Australian future.

<http://www.rossgittins.com/>



As world leaders meet to discuss the future of our common home at COP21 climate talks in Paris, you are invited to join the [People's Climate March](#) and walk alongside millions of people in major cities around the world. Come along with your parish, family and friends for a colourful, vibrant, fun and united display of people power. Marches will be taking place across Australia from the 27th – 29th of November in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Canberra, Darwin and Hobart.

By marching together we will show that we want an end to fossil fuels and a planned transition to 100% renewable energy. We will march to call on our politicians support communities that are building a better, safer and fairer future for all. We will march because we must protect creation for the vulnerable and for future generations!

Stand with the Catholic community and show you care!

As part of the [Global Catholic Climate Movement](#) we are calling on Catholics around the world to “pray and mobilise as never before, to put into practice the Pope’s *Laudato Si’* message”. Cardinal Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council Justice and Peace, said recently: “*The message of Laudato Si’ needs to be integrated into the active commitment of citizens who organize to make the pope’s message resonate in the halls of power and who demand courageous action on the part of leaders and negotiators in favor of the poor and of the planet. On Nov. 29, this is what hundreds of thousands of men, women and children will do in the Global Climate March...*”

To find a March near you and to register visit http://www.peoplesclimate.org.au/?recruiter_id=4022.

- **Melbourne, Friday 27 November** – Contact Anthony Verhoef anthony.verhoef@gmail.com

Please wear purple to the March as this colour will represent ‘many cultures, many faiths – one common home’

Source: Catholic Earthcare.com.au

ASSISI evening in Ballarat, 7 October 2015

CELEBRATING ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND LAUDATO SI

On 7 October 2015, the Diocesan Ecological Sustainability Group (ECOS) held an evening in O’Collins Hall to celebrate St Francis of Assisi and *Laudato Si*. Frank Sheehan welcomed those attending, Sandra Dillon and Fr Barry Ryan lead participants in prayer, and acknowledgement of the original owners of the land was made. The guest speakers were Associate Professor Singarayer Florentine (Florry) from the Centre for Environmental Management, Federation University Australia and Sr Veronica Lawson rsm.

Florry noted that the encyclical of Pope Francis has led to a great many more people becoming aware of the effects of climate and climate change since the release of *Laudato Si*. He mentioned a recent article in *The Age’s Good Weekend* magazine (full text included below) which featured the plight of coastal dwellers in Fiji who had to move their village some hundreds of metres inland from its original shoreline location due to the rising sea waters. <http://www.theage.com.au/good-weekend/escaping-the-waves-a-fijian-villages-forced-relocation20150831-gjc0k1.html>

As part of his presentation, Florry gave a quick overview of some of the typical arid zone vegetation communities and emphasised the issues in the arid zone. Lack of regeneration of trees and shrubs in the arid and semi-arid rangelands of south east Australia has caused widespread concern. The grazing pressure that has been exerted over most of the land for up to 150 years, coupled with the episodic nature of regeneration, means that many communities are seriously at risk. Both pastoralism and conservation depend on the long term survival of the natural perennial vegetation. Florry emphasised that the Belah/Rosewood community in particular has been severely depleted through harvesting of timber and clearing of overstorey trees in an attempt to increase growth of grasses and forbs. In addition Florry highlighted the following as major issues in arid zone Australia: (i) impacts of pastoralism, (ii) changes to water regimes, (iii) exotic plants and animals.

Florry went on to speak about Federation University Australia’s 40,000ha teaching research and conservation property, Nanya Station. In 2004 the property was purchased by Federation University Australia with assistance from the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage. He spoke about a range of research projects currently taking place up in Nanya Station, including reducing grazing pressure on the land by closing ground tanks, goat control and ripping rabbit warrens. Research includes the impacts on biodiversity after ground tank closures; regenerating endangered flora and fauna communities by using exclusion fencing around critical communities; and protecting the Mallee fowl population by implementing exotic predator control and monitoring their nest sites.

Sr Veronica concentrated on ecology from a biblical perspective and highlighted that water is at the very crux of existence. All life needs water. It is the essence of life. “Water, I take it but I don’t take it for granted” is a wonderful

daily reminder for all of us. Sr Veronica mentioned some alarming facts such as i) every minute a child dies of a water-related disease; ii) one in nine people lack access to safe water; and iii) more people have a mobile phone than a toilet. <http://water.org/water-crisis/water-facts/water/>

The evening was attended by approximately thirty people and the Diocesan Ecological Sustainability Group hope to hold more informative presentations similar to this in the future.

Source: Adapted from Ballarat Diocese e-News (15 October 2015)



Escaping the waves: a Fijian village relocates

Date October 3, 2015

Ella Rubeli

In Fiji, Ella Rubeli visits one of the first villages in the world to relocate inland because of climate change.

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/good-weekend/escaping-the-waves-a-fijian-villages-forced-relocation-20150831-gjc0k1.html#ixzz3qUwFejGK>

Village relocated due to climate change

Sailosi Ramatu, headman of Vunidogoloa in Fiji, takes us to visit his old home, one of the first villages in the world to relocate due to rising sea levels caused by climate change.

Sailosi Ramatu paces out a few steps and crouches before a silvery shoreline. His black hands begin to dig the black sand. It is not long before he finds what he is looking for: just below the surface is something solid. It's a stunt he's done with visitors before. When many understand climate change in concept but not through personal experience, this exhibit carries great weight.

"This is the post of my old house, my first house," says the 54-year-old, who was born at a time when you could rely on the seasons to bring shoals of fish, and the soils to grow fat cassavas.

In the 1960s, the Ramatu family's traditional Fijian bure stood back from the shores of Natewa Bay, on Vanua Levu, Fiji's second-largest island. To its south snaked a narrow estuary; a few considered leaps for a small boy to reach the

opposite bank and run past mangrove forests and coconut palms to school.

A broad tongue of shallow water has now spilled across the land. There are few trees. Branches lie like giant bird bones on the sand, coconut palms are strewn like feathers. "Sea-level rise and flooding, they are like two armies, they meet here and attack us," Ramatu says. "We had to fight for our lives and go to higher areas."

A decrepit structure in Vunidogoloa. Photo: Ella Rubeli



In his 12th year as headman of Vunidogoloa village on Vanua Levu, Ramatu has guided his people through increasingly extreme storms, floods and tides. Damaging weather events became so frequent that in January last year he led his village nearly two kilometres uphill to become the first community in Fiji to permanently relocate due to climate change. "It was the saddest day of my life, but I had to save my villagers. We really feared for our little children."

Summer's king tides were advancing through the village – families without boats had to build rafts just to leave their houses. Home foundations were warping, as were people's livelihoods: "We couldn't do planting any more because the soil was salty." At the new site, 30 cheerful green bungalows dot the hillside. Initially, families returned to the old village each day and only slept at the new one. Now, gardens and fish farms keep them busy up the hill and the people are slowly moving on.



The abandoned structures of old Vunidogoloa remain by the seaside, slowly sighing as the jungle repossesses them. A door flaps, too warped to return to its frame. The canted ribcage of a washhouse is being eaten away by salt and tropical damp. "There were many memories left behind," Ramatu says. A fluttering can be heard inside the old schoolhouse: a child's book, anxious in the breeze. "This is what happens during climate change. You see water coming and taking your land away. Every day, every day, every day."

Sailosi Ramatu in his former village, where high tides buckled and warped the floors of this house. Photo: Ella Rubeli

Ramatu is not alone. Epironi Rawasua, chief of nearby Wainika village, knows that when Natewa Bay eats further into the land, his people cannot move up the cliffs behind their small village because they are much too steep and rugged to build on. Mikaele Qalobula, headman of Dakuinuku on Fiji's main island, worries that more children will be lost to high tides following a drowning tragedy last year.

Rising sea levels erode roots and eventually kill trees Photo: Ella Rubeli

According to the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, about 800 communities have been impacted by climate change. Of those, 45 villages are earmarked to relocate in the next five to 10 years, and while the Fijian government partly funded Vunidogoloa's relocation, it cannot afford to support 45 more moves.



This is a story all too familiar across the Pacific and other low-lying communities around the world. While the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggests that rising temperatures will cause some communities to seek refuge abroad, most displacement will occur within countries.

Ramatu has become a climate-change poster boy for the Fijian government, attending forums, discussing his relocation experience and advising on the process. "We had hard times saving our community. I tell this to people from other Pacific islands and they cry and take my news to their neighbours. I feel very fortunate to help people understand what climate change is."



But not all aspects of the relocation have been bad. Now each house has a septic tank, a simple bathroom with a flush toilet, and solar panels. Road access to town is much easier. During king tides in the old village, children were forced to swim to school. Ramatu is proud to say that they now travel by bus. "No more swimming: our children don't have any more risk."

Clothing knotted around fallen trees indicate there once was life in an abandoned village. Photo: Ella Rubeli

Ella Rubeli was in Fiji researching a documentary, *The Wake*, with Screen Australia.

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/good-weekend/escaping-the-waves-a-fijian-villages-forced-relocation-20150831-gic0k1.html#ixzz3qUuxzbNa>

St Joseph's Parish Warrnambool celebrates the feast of St Francis of Assisi.

Truly inspired by the life of St Francis of Assisi, St Joseph's Parish Warrnambool celebrated a "Blessing of the Animals" on Friday 30th October. Parishioners were invited to bring along their pets to a blessing ceremony which was held on the front lawn of the church and presbytery. After the greeting the scripture passage of Genesis 1:24-31 led a reflection of the life of St. Francis by Fr John Fitzgerald. This was followed by a Litany of Thanks where we gave thanks to God for the gifts freely bestowed on us, - including the beauty of all creation. At this point all gathered were invited to hold their animals and give thanks. A Blue Tongue Lizard, gold fish, guinea pigs, cockatoo, cats, dogs, pigeons and a HORSE of course were all gathered along with parishioners! A Litany of Sorrow led us to acknowledge the times humans may have had negative impacts on animals.

Once the Blessing of Pets was conducted we all prayed the Prayer of St Francis together. After the dismissal two pigeons were released both as a symbol of St Francis and the breath of life of everything that lives on the earth.

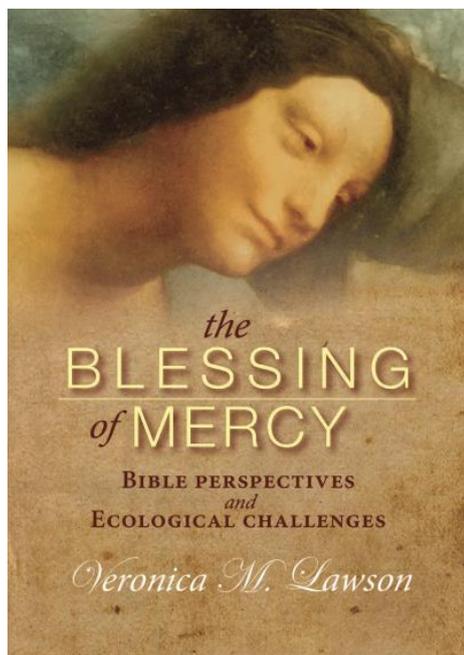
“Everything is related and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.” (92 *Laudato Si*)



St Francis of Assisi’s beautiful canticle reminds us that our common home is one that embraces us, sustains and governs us producing much fruit for us to gather. The Blessing Of The Animals was a great lead-in for an Evening Dialogue of *Laudato Si’ mi’ Signore* Praise Be To You, my Lord...to be shared on Wednesday 18th November where once again parishioners are invited to gather for a shared meal and to explore briefly the chapters of Pope Francis Encyclical letter on the Care For Our Common Home. Pope Francis is guided by St Francis’ inspiration and example of the care for the vulnerable and integral ecology which Pope Francis believes should be lived out joyfully and authentically.



Anna Schlooz



The Blessing of Mercy – Biblical Perspectives and Ecological Challenges

is a new book by Veronica Lawson, a Religious Sister of Mercy and one of Australia’s leading Catholic biblical scholars. It was released for the Jubilee Year of Mercy, which will begin on December 8, 2015.

Sr Veronica has produced this book as a gift to the Church to help us prepare for and celebrate the Year of Mercy. She combines deep scholarship to uncover the richness of the ‘mercy texts’ that abound in the books of Old and New Testaments, and she invites us to re-read the biblical texts in light of the Pope’s encyclical *Laudato Si’* with its appeal for us to listen to the cry of the Earth and the Earth’s poor.

“Pope Francis has identified divine mercy as a key to our renewal as the church of Jesus in the twenty- first century, and this requires of us an immersion in the Scriptures on this issue. I know of no better way to engage with the biblical revelation of mercy than through a reflective reading of *The Blessing of Mercy*.”

Denis Edwards Professorial Fellow, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, Australian Catholic University

This book is available for purchase from Christian bookshops or online at www.morningstarpublishing.net.au

Source: Catholic Earthcare website

A Prayer for Our Earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

*(from *Laudato si'*)*

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