

IF YOU WANT TO CULTIVATE PEACE, PROTECT CREATION

Excerpts from MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE BENEDICT XVI
FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD DAY OF PEACE
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For this XLIII World Day of Peace I have chosen the theme: If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation. Respect for creation is of immense consequence, and its preservation has now become essential for the pacific coexistence of mankind. (1)

In 1990 John Paul II had spoken of an "ecological crisis" and, in highlighting its primarily ethical character, pointed to the "urgent moral need for a new solidarity". (4)

Humanity needs a profound cultural renewal; it needs to rediscover those values which can serve as the solid basis for building a brighter future for all. Our present crises – be they economic, food-related, environmental or social – are ultimately also moral crises, and all of them are interrelated. They require us to rethink the path which we are travelling together. Specifically, they call for a lifestyle marked by sobriety and solidarity, with new rules and forms of engagement, one which focuses confidently and courageously on strategies that actually work, while decisively rejecting those that have failed. Only in this way can the current crisis become an opportunity for discernment and new strategic planning. (5)

It is not hard to see that environmental degradation is often due to the lack of far-sighted official policies or to the pursuit of myopic economic interests, which then, tragically, become a serious threat to creation. To combat this phenomenon, economic activity needs to consider the fact that "every economic decision has a moral consequence" and thus show increased respect for the environment. When making use of natural resources, we should be concerned for their protection and consider the cost entailed – environmentally and socially – as an essential part of the overall expenses incurred. To protect the environment, and to safeguard natural resources and the climate, there is a need to act in accordance with clearly-defined rules, also from the juridical and economic standpoint, while at the same time taking into due account the solidarity we owe to those living in the poorer areas of our world and to future generations. (7)

Natural resources should be used in such a way that immediate benefits do not have a negative impact on living creatures, human and not, present and future; that the protection of private property does not conflict with the universal destination of goods; that human activity does not compromise the fruitfulness of the earth, for the benefit of people now and in the future. The ecological crisis shows the urgency of a solidarity which embraces time and space. It is important to acknowledge that among the causes of the present ecological crisis is the historical responsibility of the industrialized countries. Yet the less developed countries, and emerging countries in particular, are not exempt from their own responsibilities with regard to creation, for the duty of gradually adopting effective environmental measures and policies is incumbent upon all. This would be accomplished more



easily if self-interest played a lesser role in the granting of aid and the sharing of knowledge and cleaner technologies. (8)

There is a need to encourage research into, and utilization of, forms of energy with lower impact on the environment and "a world-wide redistribution of energy resources, so that countries lacking those resources can have access to them". (9)

A sustainable comprehensive management of the environment and the resources of the planet demands that human intelligence be directed to technological and scientific research and its practical applications. At present there are a number of scientific developments and innovative approaches which promise to provide satisfactory and balanced solutions to the problem of our relationship to the environment. Encouragement needs to be given, for example, to research into effective ways of exploiting the immense potential of solar energy. Similar attention also needs to be paid to the world-wide problem of water and to the global water cycle system, which is of prime importance for life on earth and whose stability could be seriously jeopardized by climate change. Suitable strategies for rural development centred on small farmers and their families should be explored, as well as the implementation of appropriate policies for the management of forests, for waste disposal and for strengthening the linkage between combating climate change and overcoming poverty. Ambitious national policies are required. There is a need, in effect, to move beyond a purely consumerist mentality in order to promote forms of agricultural and industrial production capable of respecting creation and satisfying the primary needs of all. As I have stated elsewhere, "technology is never merely technology. It reveals man and his aspirations towards development; it expresses the inner tension that impels him gradually to overcome material limitations. (10)

We can no longer do without a real change of outlook which will result in new life-styles, "in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments". Education for peace must increasingly begin with far-reaching decisions on the part of individuals, families, communities and states. A special role in raising awareness and in formation belongs to the different groups present in civil society and to the non-governmental organizations which work with determination and generosity for the spread of ecological responsibility, responsibility which should be ever more deeply anchored in respect for "human ecology". The media also have a responsibility in this regard to offer positive and inspiring models. (11)

"When 'human ecology' is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits". Young people cannot be asked to respect the environment if they are not helped, within families and society as a whole, to respect themselves. The book of nature is one and indivisible; it includes not only the environment but also individual, family and social ethics. Our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person, considered both individually and in relation to others. (12)

Nor must we forget the very significant fact that many people experience peace and tranquillity, renewal and reinvigoration, when they come into close contact with the beauty and harmony of nature. There exists a certain reciprocity. On the other hand, a correct understanding of the relationship between man and the



environment will not end by absolutizing nature or by considering it more important than the human person. (13)

If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation. May this be clear to world leaders and to those at every level who are concerned for the future of humanity. (14)

Adapted from the Vatican, 8 December 2009, BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

To read the full text of Pope Benedict's message, please visit:

http://www.vatican.va/.../hf_ben-xvi_...-world-day-peace_en.html

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