



Diocese of Plymouth
From the Office of the Bishop

Pastoral Message on Diocesan Environmental Policy

My dear brother and sisters,

I would like to share our first Diocesan Environmental Policy with you. This was agreed by the Diocesan Trustees in January 2021. The policy is intended as a source of guidance and support to parishes and schools in their work to promote a loving care for “our common home” and to meet the ecological challenges which we all face.

The Catholic Bishop’s Conference invited us to review its own reflection document, titled the ‘Call of Creation’, to look at our present situation and to promote good practice for the diocese, our parishes and schools, as well as for families and individuals. The policy is a response to that invitation and promotes serious reflection on our relationship with God, with our neighbour and with the earth through the way we manage our resources as a Church and School community.¹

As missionary disciples, we are invited to be part of the redeeming mission of Christ, and to approach our task with joy and gratitude remembering, “Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise.” (Laudato Si’ #12). Nevertheless, as individuals and as a community of faith, we all know that there are serious environmental challenges. As Pope Francis reminds us, we are not ‘hearing the Cry of the Poor and the Earth’, and we “have grown indifferent to all kinds of wastefulness” (Fratelli Tutti #18).

As a community, “we have an obligation to ensure that every person lives with dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her integral development” (Fratelli tutti #118). Each of us is called to take concrete steps – from reducing consumption to working for change – to better care for the Creation which God has entrusted to us. As individuals we can all play our part and, collectively, we can do a great deal.

We need to recognise that the care of our common home, is not only a summons to profound ‘interior conversion’ but also a call to a ‘community conversion’. It is to be a lasting change of heart. We need to encourage individuals of all ages to take their

¹ <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/our-work/environment/season-of-creation/guardians-of-gods-creation/>

own personal action, in solidarity with the poorest and most disadvantaged people, who experience disproportionately, the negative impact of climate change and the exploitation of the earth's resources.

The Environmental Policy sets out the overarching principles behind our approach to Caring for God's Creation. It was not possible to consult widely due to Coronavirus, so this is a starting point for prayer and discernment, and it will develop over time. Your thoughts and reflections are most welcome.

I have asked *Caritas Plymouth* to be the lead point of contact for Diocesan Environmental issues. In the coming months, and in partnership with our Diocesan Education Service, *Caritas Plymouth* will be organising discussions on the policy; how we can put our faith into action; share the good work already underway and identify any additional support needed for our parishes and schools.

I want to thank all those who helped us to fashion the Environmental Policy to date. I encourage all of us to reflect seriously and to pray about these matters so that we, and future generations, can continue to enjoy the beauty of God's creation and so that we can all assist those most in need in our common home.

With my kindest wishes and prayers. Pray for me.

Yours devotedly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Mark O'Toole .". The signature is written in a cursive style with a plus sign at the beginning and a period at the end.

Rt Rev Mark O'Toole
Bishop of Plymouth