



The Vincentian  
Partnership for  
Social Justice

Working for social  
and economic  
change tackling  
poverty and  
exclusion

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The Society of  
Saint Vincent de  
Paul,  
The Vincentian  
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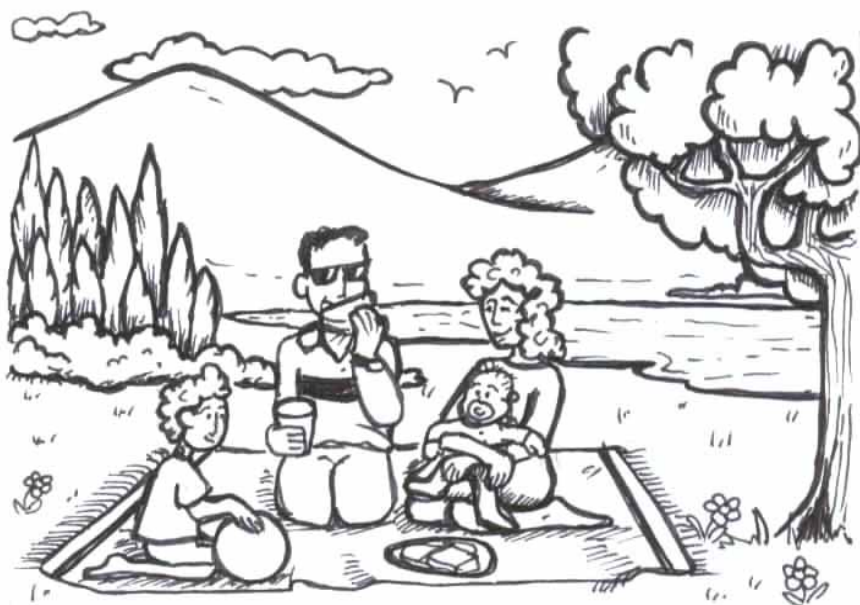
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# JUST.NOW

May – June 2006 Justice Briefing

*The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice wishes all our readers and co-workers for a more just society, a very happy and restful summer with many opportunities to enjoy the beauties of creation.*



## The Environment - Our Heritage and Our Legacy

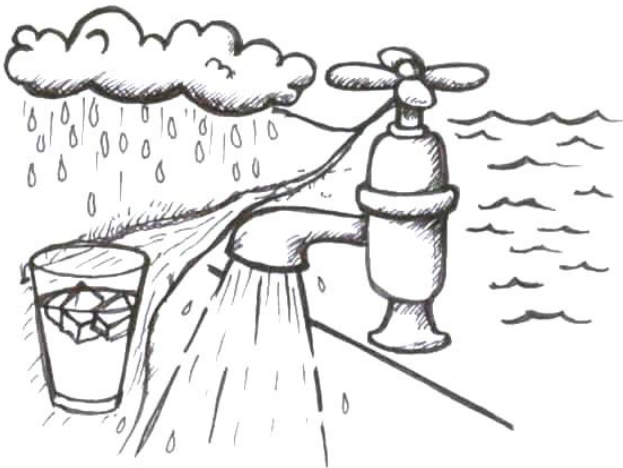
As we enjoy the golden sunshine, blue skies, the white foamed sea, tree clad hills, clear running streams and gardens a blaze with colour we can forget that we are a part of nature - part of the environment. An old Native American proverb reminds us to "Treat the earth well it was not given to us by our parents it was loaned to us by our children". Environmental issues are important for all of us. Global warming, the hole in the ozone layer, water pollution, soil damage, destruction of forests with their many forms of life are already having a negative impact on a large number of people.

This edition of Just.Now deals with the environment and the link between poverty and the environment.

# Caring for the Environment

## *Do you realise?*

- That most glaciers in the world are melting - a clear sign of climate change.
- That the lives of one billion people are threatened by drought and desertification.
- That 277, 574 people are reported killed between 1992 - 2001 because of drought and famine.
- That global warming is melting Arctic sea ice and endangering wild life and affecting traditional ways of life.
- That wealthy energy consuming nations are most responsible for global warming.
- Low income populations are most at risk from its devastating effects such as flooding and rising sea levels.
- That pollution is responsible for the deaths of 25,000 children each year. Industrial growth and increasing urbanisation aggravate the problem.
- That Global Warming means that we burn fuels - like coal, gas and oil giving off dangerous gases. These gases stay in the atmosphere and trap the heat from the sun. In this way the earth is becoming a huge green house. Trees soak up some of the harmful gas, so destroying the rain forest is making this problem worse.
- Acid Rain - car exhaust fumes and gases from industry are dissolved in rain and fall on the soil and trees as acid rain. As a consequence fish and forest die. People get lung and heart disease and cancer.
- The Hole in the Ozone Layer means that 10 miles above our head there is a layer of ozone gas that protects us from harmful invisible ultraviolet rays. The ozone layer is being destroyed by chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons (CFS). They are used to keep fridges cool and are found in some aerosols and solvents. Each summer a huge hole in the ozone layer widens and the protective layer gets thinner. As a result the earth is more at risk. There is an increase in skin cancers, eye diseases and less food is produced.
- Water at Risk. Water is being contaminated by chemicals (*from industries and farms*), sewage and the dumping of waste. Some parts of the world have plenty of water while millions of people have grave difficulty in getting the water they need.



# Caring for the Environment

## Why are People in Poverty more directly affected by abuse of the Environment?

- 1 billion people are affected by soil erosion, overgrowing, overplanting and cutting down of the forests.
- 1.2 billion people are without access to clean water. Water pollution affects people in poverty disproportionately.
- Water scarcity affects people in poverty unfairly since they cannot pay for water's rising costs. If current patterns do not improve two thirds of the world's population could be living in countries suffering from water scarcity.
- 1 out of 5 illnesses in developing countries can be attributable to preventable environmental risk factors.
- Every 8 seconds one child on earth dies from water related illnesses.
- 500,000 people die prematurely each year as a result of urban air pollution. The movement of people in poverty from the country to the cities is an increasing and worrying trend in developing countries.

### What can we do?

- Educate ourselves and our friends about the facts.
- Support existing commitments e.g. Millennium Goals.
- Live simply. Live Ecologically.
- Consciously choose a simpler and more ecological lifestyle, which will, put us in greater solidarity with the vast majority of people who lack the choices we take for granted.

In our lifestyle choices we witness to our beliefs.



### 10 Small Steps Towards Sustainability

1. Garden, plant trees, and clean-up your local park.
2. Use cloth instead of paper whenever possible: napkins, house cleaning, grocery bags, etc.
3. Make use of your local secondhand store.
4. Reuse cans, jars, containers, cardboard, and paper whenever possible (and then RECYCLE!).
5. Conserve water: use low flow showerheads, put a 2 litre bottle full of water in your toilet tank, turn the water off while brushing your teeth and washing the dishes.
6. Conserve energy: open windows in the summer and wear layers in the winter, use fluorescent light bulbs, turn the lights out and your computer off when not needed.
8. Bike, carpool, and take public transportation.
9. Use eco-friendly cleaning supplies. [www.seventhgeneration.com](http://www.seventhgeneration.com)
10. Write to your representatives about the need to develop sustainable energy sources and to work more closely with the international community in reducing pollution and global warming.

## Reflections

By 2020, over 60% of the world's population will live in cities, putting an even greater strain on natural resources. As industrialisation spreads around the globe, urbanisation, high-energy use and pollution follow in its wake. Oceans are depleted, forests stripped bare and animal and plant species threatened with extinction. Already more than one third of the world's population is short of water. Climate change, linked to the emission of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, is making the situation worse.

*Sunday Tribune*

### A Prayer for Sustainability

As we breathe  
the very air which sustains us,  
We remember your love, God,  
which compels us.  
Fill us with  
the spirit to seek understanding.  
Empty us of  
apathy, selfishness and fear.  
Fill us with  
compassion and generosity.  
Empty us of  
all pessimism and hesitation.  
Breathe into us  
solidarity with all who suffer  
beneath the crossroads  
of pollution and poverty.  
Breathe us into action  
building your sustainable Kingdom.

### Prayer for the Environmental Common Good

As we breathe the very air which sustains us,  
We remember your love, God, which gives us  
life. Fill us with your compassion for Creation.  
Empty us of apathy, selfishness and fear, of all  
pessimism and hesitation.  
Breathe into us solidarity with all who suffer  
Now and the future generations who will suffer  
because of our environmental irresponsibility.  
Move us into action to save our earth and to  
build your sustainable Kingdom. Amen.

A solution to ecological challenges demands more than just economic and technological proposals. It requires an inner change of heart which leads to the rejection of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. It demands an ethical behavior which respects the principles of universal solidarity, social justice and responsibility.

*Pope John Paul II, May 2003*

Modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its lifestyle. In many parts of the world society is given to instant gratification and consumerism while remaining indifferent to the damage, which these attitudes cause. Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of a few.

*Pope John Paul II, Call for Ecological Conversion, January, 2001, General Audience*



### Acknowledgements:

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Sunday Tribune “The World of the Environment” 2005  
Education for Justice

**Join together to make a better world**