



**Catholic
Earthcare Australia**

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Nobel Prize Winner, Al Gore endorses Catholic Earthcare's 'ASSISI'

Building a consensus within the Catholic Church to be an ecological leader will require at least five years of consultation to achieve, the head of Catholic Earthcare Australia has told environmental champion, former US Vice-President, Mr Al Gore.

At a meeting in Sydney on 14 July, Catholic Earthcare's executive director, Jacqui Remond briefed Mr Gore on Earthcare's mandate from the Australian Bishops' to affect an 'ecological conversion' to an environmentally sustainable church in Australia.

Ms Remond said Earthcare's ecological sustainability model 'ASSISI' (A Strategic, Systems-based Integrated Sustainability Initiative) was now being piloted in Catholic schools and parishes in NSW and Queensland, in the Franciscan congregation in Australia and New Zealand, and in St John of God hospitals.

"Is this program for young people?" asked Mr Gore.

"ASSISI is a vision of sustainability for the whole church," Ms Remond said. "The reaction of students is that they love it, and when we build on passion we're building the program, but it's important for children to see adults modelling sustainability as they can learn by example."

The Catholic workforce in Australia, said Ms Remond, numbers 130,000 nationwide. "The plan for ASSISI is to reach, over five years, the entire church."

As part of ASSISI's pathway to an ecologically sustainable church, she said Earthcare in partnership with Carbon Systems Australia had started an ecological audit "across thousands of parishes, schools, agencies, and institutions, including hospitals."

The trial includes an automated data collection tool for measuring, monitoring, benchmarking and reporting each organisation's ecological footprint, beginning with water, energy and carbon.

Mr Gore endorsed the initiative. "In business there is an old saying, 'Measure what you manage'. The availability of this new tool for measuring our impact on the environment allows us to measure and manage, and that helps us to be good stewards in caring for God's creation."

Archbishop Adrian Doyle, Chairman of the Bishops Committee for Justice and Development, said both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have shown strong leadership on ecology.

"Pope Benedict's most recent encyclical calls on the international community to regulate the exploitation of non-renewable resources and for advanced societies to lower their domestic energy consumption." Archbishop Doyle told Mr Gore.

Mr Gore, who won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for alerting the world to the consequences of climate change, responded, “Affected by grace, Catholic Earthcare has the power of transformative change when change really means action.”

Catholic Earthcare he said was “a truly historic movement that will lead to a change of mind that will be reflected in mind and action. The number of people affected will be immense.”

Mr Gore said, ‘I would like to offer Catholic Earthcare a version of my slideshow presentation that uses scriptural references throughout which I’ve used with religious ministers in the United States. The American Catholic Bishops have been very active in this work.

The presentation, he said, begins with the famous audio broadcast made by the crew of the Apollo 8 on Christmas Eve, 1968, as the spacecraft swung back from the far side of the Moon into the bright light of Earthrise.

Those starkly contrasting images of the Earth and Moon – one vibrant with life, the other cratered and lifeless – became iconic, as over them the astronauts read from the Book of Genesis, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth...”.

At the end of the audio, mission commander, Jim Lovell, signed off it as an extraterrestrial looking back from the distance of a quarter of a million miles away – ‘the blue planet’ had never looked so beautiful, or so fragile. “Good night, good luck, Merry Christmas and God bless you all All of you on the good Earth.”

END STORY

(610 words)

Story by Dan McAloon