

LAUNCH OF CATHOLIC EARTHCARE AUSTRALIA
PADDINGTON – 30 JUNE, 2002

Your Eminence Cardinal Clancy, Members of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, Interim Members of Catholic Earthcare Australia, distinguished guests, and friends:

The entire life of Christians is an exploration into Christ. Each generation pushes back ever so slightly the envelope of his mystery. The Spirit of God, whether hovering over the world or the Church, enables one to penetrate that mystery ever more deeply, allowing us to understand the vision of God's reign more completely. One of the most significant developments in Catholic understanding of the Christian mission in more recent times is its embrace of creation in all its beauty and vitality. Although the seeds of this development may have been sewn in the theology and spirituality of the Second Vatican Council, nevertheless it seems to have taken on a life of its own since then, often growing faster outside the boundaries of the traditional Church than within, and being more enthusiastically and spontaneously embraced by the younger members of the Church than by their parents and grandparents.

Perhaps young people's awareness of the dangers of environmental mismanagement has given them a greater sense of urgency than their older relations. Whatever the reasons for their passionate and caring acceptance of the environment it surely fits easily within Christ's evangelizing vision of the total transformation of our world, so as to create a new world for all, both now and in the future.

The care for the environment that Pope John Paul II appropriately names “ecological conversion” is surely one of the great manifestations of God’s Spirit for our age, and a fitting preparation for the new millennium we have just entered. Well might we ask ourselves as Christians: “How could we possibly have overlooked it for so long?” “How could our understanding of Christ’s mission have been so mean and so narrow?” Nevertheless with the leadership of the Pope himself we are now being called upon to expand our vision. It seems entirely appropriate therefore that here in Australia today in response to the Pope’s request, we should be launching Catholic Earthcare Australia as an attempt to enlist Catholics in this further aspect of evangelization, and to educate people about the depth of vision demanded of those who would follow in Christ’s footsteps. It seems to me that the launch of this new Council is one of the truly significant events in the life of the Catholic Church in more recent times. I do appeal therefore to all Catholics to rejoice with us today in the launch of Catholic Earthcare Australia. I thank you all for coming here to support this significant initiative.

It is now with a real sense of honour, a well founded optimism about the talents and energy gathered in the interim Council, and a profound trust in God’s grace that I now officially launch Catholic Earthcare Australia and ask God’s blessings upon its future work.