

THE COSMIC DANCE - CARING FOR CREATION

*In 1973 the United Nations General Assembly declared **June 5 World Environment Day**, in order to focus world-wide attention on environmental issues. The JPIC working group on the environment has taken this occasion to launch a series of short papers on environmental issues. The aim is to furnish JPIC Promoters with information, and a forum for the exchange of best practice in their animation work with their Institutes. Climate change has been chosen for the opening of this series as a phenomenon calling for an immediate and global response.*

CLIMATE CHANGE

The immediacy of the problem.

As early as 1958, Charles Keeling established an atmospheric CO₂ watch on Mt. Maura Loa, Hawaii. Recent observations indicate a striking increase in the rate of concentration of CO₂ in the air. From an annual increase of 1.5 parts per million between 1958 and 2001 the rate rose to 2.5 ppm in the year 2002 and increased by a further 2.5 ppm in 2003. This may account for the recent far higher rate of rise of mean temperature than climatologists had predicted only a few year ago. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is agreed that global temperature is increasing and that the main cause is the accumulation of carbon dioxide and other 'greenhouse gases' in the atmosphere as a result of human activity. On the assumption that CO₂ emissions will increase proportionately with the intensified industrialisation of the developing economies - notably China and India - it is estimated that the global mean temperature could rise by 6° C by the end of the 21st. century. This contrasts with an increase of 0.6° C for the whole of the 20th century.

Where the burden falls.

Climate change may undermine long term development and the ability of many poor people to escape poverty. and will clearly threaten the ability of many poor people to escape poverty and will clearly threaten our ability to achieve some of the Millennium Development goals. The IPCC concludes..

The greater the rate and magnitude of change, the more adverse the consequences
Developing countries, and especially the poor within them, are the most vulnerable to climate change.
The number of people adversely affected by climate change is greater than the number that benefit from it.

Low-lying Small Island States and delta regions of developing countries in South Asia, the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean could disappear in the rising sea, displacing tens of millions of people.

Tropical diseases threaten to become more widespread.

Crop production could decrease significantly in Africa and Latin America.

Access to clean water will become even more precarious.

Possible responses.

The causes of global warming are associated with progress understood as economic enrichment. Consequently the identified measures to reduce global warming and its effects all call for self-imposed limitations at personal, local, regional and global levels. The focus then is on control through legislation and convention at the socioeconomic level and, at the personal level, on styles of life.

Legislation and Conventions.

Since there is no authority competent to frame laws that bind globally, environmental issues are in the domain of conventions. Where the global atmosphere is in question, only internationally agreed controls will be effective. In climate change there can only be all winners or all losers. We are responsible for bringing

pressure to bear on national legislators and other leaders to move the topic up the political agenda through our written petitions and lobbying.

Some relevant instruments:-1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) was adopted and later ratified. It sets out principles governing care of the climate and is open to protocols addressing specific problems.
1997 *Kyoto Protocol*, (UNFCCC.) sets targets for the industrialized countries for the reduction of greenhouse gases to their 1990 levels.
2005. *G8 Summit*, to meet in UK. The host government will attempt to establish grounds for post 2012 agreements.
2005-2015 *The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* provides an opportunity for consciousness raising regarding environmental issues while the Social Doctrine of the Church provides foundational principles of faith to guide our reflection and action

Our Faith Tradition:

Our life-styles as religious women and men encourage us to contemplate the beauty and presence of God in all things, leading us to conversion of heart.

“What is required is an act of repentance on our part. A solution at the economic and technological level can only be found if we undergo in the most radical way an inner change of heart which can lead to a change in life-style and of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. A genuine conversion in Christ will enable us to change the way we think and act” (Joint declaration of John Paul II and Bartholomew I., June 10, 2002).

Some resources .

- . www.ipcc.ch Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
- www.envirolink.org Links to major sites dedicated to the environment.
- www.climatenetwork.org Consortium of NGOs focused on global warming
- www.iisd.ca/climate International Institute for Sustainable Development

Planned dates for future numbers of THE COSMIC DANCE .

October 16, 2005.	World Food Day	December 10, 2005.	Human Rights Day
March 22, 2006.	World Water Day	April 22, 2006.	World Water Day
May 21, 2006.	World Forest Day		

PROMOTERS' CORNER.

Future numbers will have this feature. Please send brief comments on/for 'The Cosmic Dance' Especially welcome will be those coming from your experience, practice and sources. Notes related to the next planned number will be welcome - to arrive at the JPIC Office (aderoeper@lasalle.org) at least 10 days before publication is due.