

*Following the talk by Fr Sean McDonagh at the J & P Assembly, here is the report on what he said as offered by one of those who were present:*

'Conserving Creation' a talk given by Sean McDonagh ssc

Fr. Sean gave an extremely thought provoking talk covering a very wide range of serious ecological problems facing the world today. He said that you couldn't work for Justice and Peace today, and not be seriously concerned about the environment. He went into considerable detail explaining how all living creatures are important to the continued existence of life in earth as well as the non-living things we need to survive, for example water, oil and food.



Unfortunately today's human desire for more and more of everything and the vast number of people living in the world is destroying its natural resources. It is vital that our selfish desires for personal comfort and our extravagant way of living is changed now, or there will be world disaster.



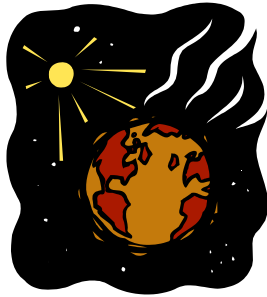
In other words we are destroying the world, which was given to us to look after as stewards. He feels that the greatest issue facing agriculture over the next 50 years is the lack of water not just in the third world but every where and that the next major war will not be over oil but access to water! He pointed out the symbolic use of water in our liturgy and sacraments. To be able to make this change, he said, we must act now!

He told us that in his experience of living and working with the T'boli tribe in the Philippines, he had learned a lot about the true understanding of nature and our place within it. He spoke about a theology of creation where we no longer have dominion over the environment and the creatures but one where we live in harmony with nature so that we may hand on to future generations the necessities and the beauty God's Creation.

The greatest problem is global warming caused by many forests being cut down, CO2 emissions, and the rapid population increase. We must all look seriously at the causes of these world wide problems and what the underlying reasons are. Then we must take appropriate action.



All suggested actions must be looked at carefully to make sure they are both useful and wise e.g. genetic engineering, fair trade, how to progress without exploiting the third world's natural resources etc.



The west must also change its lifestyle, taking a shower and not a bath, stopping the unnecessary use of the car and adopting car sharing instead, not leaving lights on, etc, as all these contribute to the CO2 emission and help to create global warming.

On a wider scale we must all protest about the way some multinationals exploit and devastate the resources of the third world.

All these problems are deeply intertwined so we will need considerable knowledge and research. There is no easy solution but as Fr. Sean made clear that Christians must look to the old and new testaments and the liturgy and interpret them in the light of today's knowledge; we must also preserve the whole variety of God's creation and do this as 'servants' rather than 'owners and lords.' In fact, we hold the whole future of the world in our hands.

Doreen Rolfe May 2006

