



«THE TIME FOR CONVERSION IS NOW...»

a report to the Bishops of COMECE on climate protection



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(Original in German)

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Bishops of COMECE.



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FOREWORD

The European Union is set to play a key role in the negotiations concerning the agreement on climate protection at the “*Conference of the Parties*” (COP 21). The industrial revolution had its beginnings in Europe and, as a consequence, over the past two hundred years Europe has contributed more than any other continent to the phenomenon we know as “*global warming*”. There is a political will in Europe to pay our historical “*climate debts*” by contributing as positively as possible to the framing of a legally binding agreement on climate protection in the context of COP 21. Such an agreement would represent the long-awaited turning point in climate protection policy.

Since its foundation in 1980 the mission of COMECE, acting in the name of the Catholic Church in Europe, has been to accompany the process of European integration, to observe, to support and – when necessary – to enter into dialogue with those with primary responsibility for seeing through this project. For us as bishops of COMECE it is important for us to take a stand on questions where social and global justice are at issue. In his encyclical letter *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis presented a detailed, comprehensive and, in many respects, fresh new vision of ecological and social issues and problems in the name of the Catholic Church. Taken together with an earlier position paper on climate protection presented to COMECE in 2008, the encyclical sets the background to a new report entitled “*The time for conversion is now...*”, which was prepared by a small working party of experts in collaboration with the COMECE Secretariat and presented to the plenary assembly in October 2015. The bishops welcomed this document at a basis for further discussion. The group was made up of experts from a variety of academic disciplines: natural sciences, humanities, theology and ethics. In the name of COMECE, I should like to extend thanks to the five members of the working group: Dr. Cecilia Dall'Oglio (Rome, Italy), Professor Dr. Celia Deane-Drummond (Notre Dame, USA), Professor Dr. Wolfgang Lutz (Laxenburg, Austria), Father Sean McDonagh (Dublin, Ireland) and Professor Dr. Otwin Renn (Stuttgart, Germany). It affords me pleasure to acknowledge their work and availability, their expertise and experience put at our disposal. I should also like to thank the Secretariat for co-ordinating this enterprise and seeing to the final text of the report.



It is our hope that this report may receive due consideration as a contribution in the name of the Church to the climate debate and to the negotiations which open in Paris at the end of November 2015. I take this occasion to invite bishops' conferences and individual dioceses to make use of the report as they may see fit. It can provide a basis of discussions with political representatives or social actors. It is my hope that the recommendations made in the report can contribute to the "ecological conversion" on which Pope Francis set such emphatic store in his encyclical letter *Laudato si'*.

Reinhard Cardinal MARX
Archbishop of Munich and Freising
President of COMECE

INTRODUCTION

"Climate change poses an increasing threat to the well-being of humanity both for present and future generations. [...] It is increasingly understood to have become a question of survival for a large part of mankind. The scientific community is overwhelmingly convinced that ongoing climate change is caused primarily by the increase of man-made greenhouse gas emissions and by the over-consumption of natural resources as a result of the lifestyles of the industrialised societies, the societal and economic systems underlying these lifestyles and the increasing pressure this puts on people and resources in the developing world.

*For most of human history there has been a tacit acceptance of the need to exploit our environment to create a world fashioned to suit our needs for food, shelter, transport and technology. Today, technology has enabled us to become dominators of the natural world. We must recognise that the unsustainable, resource-intensive lifestyles of the industrialised world today cannot be made available to all the people of the world and they prejudice the Earth's capacity to support those who come after us."*¹

DISAPPOINTMENTS | The quotation above comes from the report drafted by COMECE in the run-up to the COP 15 climate conference held in Copenhagen in 2008. On "re-reading" this report, we note that in the years that have elapsed since its publication very little, or virtually nothing, has changed either in the climate situation it describes nor in the measures deemed necessary to achieve the climate protection goals. It is regrettable that our findings from seven years back are still valid. The COP 15 held in Copenhagen in December 2009 was associated with the expectation of a binding agreement that could replace the Kyoto Protocol. This expectation ended in disappointment as the agreement did not materialise.

¹ Report to the Bishops of COMECE, "A Christian view on climate change - The implications of climate change for lifestyles and EU policies", Brussels, 2008, p.1. (available for download on <http://www.comece.eu/site/en/ecologysustainability>)



HOPES | Nevertheless, there is guarded hope with respect to the COP 21 climate conference to be held in Paris in December 2015 that what failed six years ago might succeed this time. i.e. a binding agreement to guarantee that the rise in the global average temperature in the twenty-first century is kept at or below 2°C compared with the average temperature of the pre-industrial period.

GROWING PUBLIC AWARENESS | There is growing public awareness of the need for climate protection and achieving this goal, with extreme weather situations in all parts of the world in recent years making people even more alert to the underlying problem of altered climatic conditions. Climate change is becoming a tangible reality for large numbers of people, triggering fear and uncertainty.

There are various developments in politics and economics that cautiously nurture the hope that the objective – the conclusion of a binding agreement in Paris – might be achieved:

- The conclusions of the G7 summit held in Elmau in June 2015, which emphasise the necessary “*de-carbonisation*” of the economy²;
- The agreement at the UNFCCC meeting held in Bonn in June 2015 on protection of the rain forests³;
- The US government plan to reduce greenhouse gases in energy production – (US Clean Power Plan)⁴;
- The conclusions of the EU-China summit held in June 2015, which propose joint steps towards a “*low-carbon economy*”⁵;
- The common position of the EU member states for COP 21 adopted on 18 September 2015⁶;

2 https://www.g7germany.de/Content/DE/_Anlagen/G8_G20/2015-06-08-g7-abschluss-eng.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=5

3 <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/sbsta/eng/l05.pdf>

4 <http://www2.epa.gov/cleanpowerplan/clean-power-plan-existing-power-plants>

5 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2015/06/150629-EU-China-Joint-Statement-on-Climate-Change/>

6 http://ec.europa.eu/clima/news/articles/news_2015091801_en.htm

- The announcement of President Obama and President Xi Jinping on 25 September 2015 on shared climate goals⁷;
- The presidents of the continental episcopal conference groupings from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and Oceania, as well as the presidents of the bishops’ conferences of Canada and the USA, published on 26 October 2015 a common appeal addressed to the negotiators in Paris to commit themselves to producing a just and legally binding climate protection agreement, which would be truly transformational.⁸

NECESSARY STEPS | All of these small, but important steps should not belie the great endeavours that are still required to facilitate a binding agreement at all. The big gap between the rich and poor nations is probably the greatest hurdle, with due attention being paid to the role of the emerging economies. Overcoming this is decisive for whether agreement can be reached on many of the issues still outstanding (reduction of emissions vs. adaptation to change, joint but differentiated responsibility for climate change [CBDR], the costs of climate damage, allocation of the Green Climate Fund).

CONTRIBUTION OF THE CHURCHES? | How can the Church, and COMECE in particular, contribute to this process on the “*path to Paris*”? The Church-based NGOs, especially Caritas and CIDSE, are performing competent, detailed, informed and tireless advocacy work together with other NGOs, also non-ecclesiastical bodies, in the run-up to the COP 21 with a view to facilitating the conclusion of a binding agreement in December 2015. The value of this vital work cannot be too highly praised or appreciated by the bishops.

7 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/25/us-china-joint-presidential-statement-climate-change>

8 <http://www.comece.eu/site/en/ourwork/pressreleases/2015/article/9890.html>



"CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME" – GUIDELINES FOR ORIENTATION AND ACTION

With the encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, the Magisterium of the Church published for the first time an extensive document on ecology and climate protection. There is more to the papal letter than just a *status quaestionis* on climate: in a fundamental analysis, it makes the connection between the pressing issues of climate change, the threat to the environment, our use of natural resources, poverty, hunger and social injustice. It does not look to provide any "definite answers" in a scientific and social debate but, rather, offers "guidelines for orientation and action".⁹

A COMMON HOME | Our planet Earth is the common home of all people. Together with St. Francis of Assisi, whose name he adopted after his election as Pope (LS 10), Pope Francis calls this home "*our sister, Mother Earth*" (LS 1). As this Earth is only one and all living creatures are part of it and are siblings (LS 2), he therefore directs his letter not only towards Christians or Catholics but, rather, to all people – because they are all affected by what is happening to our planet.

SEEING REALITY | As a first step, we have to "*turn to what is happening to our common home*" (LS 17). To start with, we have environmental pollution that can be ascribed to a wide variety of causes (including the excessive use of fertilizers and toxic agro-chemicals). We all agree that we have climate change, which can no longer be denied, and the greater part of which, according to the view shared by most scientists, is caused by humans. The depletion of natural resources caused by irresponsible use of them as well as a rampant "*consumption and throw-away culture*" is an undisputed fact. The threat to drinking water from pollution as well as persistent drought are also widely acknowledged. The depletion of natural

⁹ Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home (2015). http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html



stocks, such as fish, and the loss of biological diversity are agreed upon by most experts. The decimation of the forests and grasslands, one of the most important greenhouse gas sinks¹⁰, is also a regrettable phenomenon accepted by virtually everyone.

The changes flagged up by Pope Francis are not, however, confined solely to the environment and climate. *"The gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest."* (LS 48) Social injustice and the gulf between the poor and the rich, both on an individual basis as well as between countries and regions, is growing and is essentially also caused in part by the impact of environmental pollution and climate change, which seriously affects them.

There is a lack of political leadership and the absence of a binding regulatory and legal framework for a globalised economy and technology. Furthermore our leaders lack the courage and perseverance to arrive at binding global solutions to protect the *"climate as a common good"* (LS 23), and make furthering the common good the basis of the action needed. The *"cheerful recklessness"* with which important decisions are put on the long finger as if nothing had happened is astonishing. (LS 59)

A COMPLEX CRISIS | Science and technology have undoubtedly contributed to progress and the betterment of human life. Gradually, however, a pattern of thought that conceives of things exclusively in categories of technical feasibility has pervaded all other areas of life, dominating both society and politics. Technical specialisation leads to a fragmentation of thinking, blocking a view of the bigger picture, which needs to be understood in order to find a solution to the major problems of climate change, environmental degradation and marginalisation.

This technocratic paradigm corresponds to a way of thinking whose central preoccupation is man and his concerns that reduces nature and the environment to an exclusive object of human action and deprives it of its intrinsic value: everything is merely the material of human design. What is no longer consumable, usable or recyclable is thrown away. This attitude affects the relationship of man with himself and with nature as well as his social relations: *"We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex*

¹⁰ Greenhouse Gas Sinks are all those biotopes which are able to bind greenhouse gases (mainly, but not exclusively CO₂): Rain forests and the oceans.

crisis which is both social and environmental." (LS 139) Therefore, *"Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature"* (ibid.).

UNRESTRAINED GROWTH? | The second root of the climate/environment problem, apart from anthropocentric thinking, lies in the *"idea of never-ending and limitless growth"* that has so enthralled the economists, financial experts and technologists. However, this growth presupposes the big lie relating to the unlimited availability of the planet's resources, which results in it *"being squeezed dry beyond every limit"* (LS 106). It concerns *"the false notion that 'an infinite quantity of energy and resources are available, that it is possible to renew them quickly, and that the negative effects of the exploitation of the natural order can be easily absorbed'"* (ibid.) In other words, the notion of unlimited exponential growth in principle (the basis of our capitalist economic system) is not compatible with the fact that our planet Earth and its resources are limited. We will not be able to find a sustainable future-oriented solution without admitting this fact.

NEW "INTEGRATIVE-ECOLOGICAL" THINKING | Overcoming the socio-economic crisis and countering fragmentation requires an *"integral ecology"*, integrated thinking that is able to restore the correlation between the environment, the economy, society, culture and people's everyday lives. It needs enlightened policies and politicians who have the courage and are able to focus on serving the common good as the primary principle of their actions, think in terms of generations over the long term and work on appropriate solutions; it needs *"a politics which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis."* (LS 197)

AN ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION | The situation may seem to many to be dramatic, *"Yet all is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning."* (LS 205)

Ultimately, it comes down to an *"ecological conversion"*. It has to start with ourselves, with our thinking and actions. The necessary U-turn lies in a conversion that Pope Francis characterises with the words mindfulness, humility, modesty, finding pleasure in small things and solidarity. It is a matter of a different attitude of the heart.



As necessary as this individual conversion is, it requires a “*structural reversal*” at the same time that also includes politics, the economy and social life. The papal encyclical quotes Romano Guardini: “*This task ‘will make such tremendous demands of man that he could never achieve it by individual initiative or even by the united effort of men bred in an individualistic way. The work of dominating the world calls for a union of skills and a unity of achievement that can only grow from quite a different attitude’. The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion.*” (LS 219)

RESPONSIBILITY, ADAPTATION, MODERATION - STEPS OF AN “ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION”

“*On many concrete questions, the Church has no reason to offer a definitive opinion.*” (LS 61) Nevertheless, the Church has to do more than just make a lofty statement of principles. To translate principle into practice, we would like to propose specific steps here in order to present a number of specific projects at the end of our observations aimed at implementing these deliberations in practice.

The responsibility of international politics to adopt an enforceable agreement and regulatory framework in Paris in December 2015 through which the emission of greenhouse gases is reduced to the level needed to achieve the goal of keeping global warming to a maximum of 2°C in the twenty-first century compared with the pre-industrial age would appear to us to be a pressing requirement. This agreement should be flexible to the extent that it can be adapted to possible developments in the meantime without any major modification or amendments.

At the same time, precautionary measures also need to be taken by way of agreements in order to provide protection against the consequences of the changes that have already occurred and accordingly compensate financially for the costs of these same consequences.

TWO POLITICAL PRINCIPLES OF CHANGE

“ECOLOGICAL DEBT AND DIFFERENTIATED RESPONSIBILITY” | The industrialised nations have substantially contributed to climate change – through the prolonged exploitation of fossil fuels, the associated increase in greenhouse gas emissions and the reduction of or damage to greenhouse gas sinks (rain forests/oceans). However, the consequences of climate change affect those countries most which derive least benefit from this industrialisation and who have contributed to climate change to a much lesser extent. It is therefore a matter of justice that “*the countries*



which have benefited from a high degree of industrialization, at the cost of enormous emissions of greenhouse gases, have a greater responsibility for providing a solution to the problems they have caused.” (LS 170)

According to the principle of joint, though differentiated responsibility already included in the 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change, it is the responsibility of the industrialised countries, including those which in recent years have become industrialised, commonly termed the emerging economies, to repay their “*ecological debt*” (LS 51) built up over a long period of time, contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to a greater extent and pay an appropriate part of the costs of remedying the consequences caused by climate change. This also includes financial and technological support for the developing countries to enable them to switch to low-emission energy sources.

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE | Arriving at a sustainable, effective solution requires interaction at the local, national and global levels. The players in industry and finance think and act globally. The impact of climate change is “*borderless*” while having a local impact at the same time. In order to find solutions in this complex crisis, decide on them and monitor their implementation, a “*global regulatory framework*” or “*global governance*” (LS 175) is needed which must, however, endeavour to balance the local, national and global levels and take account of the different cultures.

Finding this promising, global consensus requires dialogue, participation and involvement on the part, as far as possible, of all the players affected by the measures to be taken. Economic viability and technical feasibility must not be the only criteria that have to be taken into consideration for possible solutions in this regard: it is the gearing of the measures to the long-term common good that is the vitally important factor.

PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARDS AN ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION BEYOND COP 21

REDUCTION OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS | Three steps are essential for a successful transition to a sustainable energy future and tolerable climate: *de-carbonisation*, *de-materialisation* and *re-naturalisation*. These three processes are inextricably linked and must be carried out at the same time in order to increase the chances of mitigating climate change and transforming our current energy system into a system that is sustainable.

De-carbonisation comprises two stages: the first would be to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy sources and through consistent energy savings; the second step would be to put a stop to the destruction of carbon sinks, especially the rain forests. Both steps require economic and political transformations: enhancing the attractiveness of renewable energy sources and changing the behaviour of energy-hungry citizens. They should be encouraged more towards greater energy efficiency and more modest energy consumption.

The aim of *de-materialisation* comprises replacing natural raw resources and material goods with (immaterial) information as well as the smart and efficient use of raw materials, e.g. in a circular economy or by applying the “*cradle to cradle*” principle¹¹. This requires, however, a new policy of economic evaluation that makes material goods more expensive and intangible goods more easily accessible.

Re-naturalisation comprises the global endeavour to preserve bio-diversity and establish larger areas of undisturbed eco-systems. These endeavours must lead to a global framework agreement that ensures the reliable protection of ecologically valuable landscapes and does not transform them into agricultural areas.

¹¹ A phrase invented by Walter R. Stahel in the 1970s and popularized by William McDonough and Michael Braungart in their 2002 book of the same name. This framework seeks to create production techniques that are not just efficient but are essentially waste free. In cradle to cradle production all material inputs and outputs are seen either as technical or biological nutrients. Technical nutrients can be recycled or reused with no loss of quality and biological nutrients composted or consumed.



However, this can only be achieved if people in the more affluent parts of the world are prepared to finance the endeavours in the poorer countries and compensate those who are also actually prevented from using the land in an economic way due to these protective measures.

Christians can be the driving force in this regard to bring about the necessary political, economic and cultural changes. Beyond the joint action required to realise these transformations and support those carrying them out, the Church could also offer a platform for a radical and far-reaching reflection on effective, efficient and fair strategies and ways of implementing these three steps.

ADAPTING TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE | In the context of climate change, the hitherto almost exclusive preoccupation with reducing emissions has shifted towards a greater interest in adapting to the anticipated consequences of the climate change that has already occurred. In this context, adaptation does not mean searching exclusively for technical solutions (such as reinforcing dykes in those areas threatened by rising sea levels or erecting protection systems in areas frequently hit by tropical cyclones). People have to be helped, particularly in poorer countries, to respond to challenges and threats better and more quickly by way of education (through anticipation, appropriate and rapid response to warnings, handling and enhancing restoration forces after disasters brought about by climate change).

Studies have shown that education imparts those cognitive and solution-oriented skills that enable individuals to respond better to natural disasters and mitigate their consequences.

Special attention must be paid to those groups that are most susceptible to the consequences of climate change. The reaction of these groups can be very different depending on the country, region or communities.

AN "ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION" AND A DIFFERENT LIFESTYLE | If climate change is only one symptom of the unsustainable way of life, modes of production and patterns of consumption that have evolved in the industrialised world, it is then clear that exclusively technical solutions or a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions alone cannot solve the problem of sustainability. Real change is needed at a deeper, cultural level of our behaviour, an "*ecological conversion*": moving away from an attitude of the domination of man over nature and towards the awareness that

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there is a close relationship between humans and all other creatures, the growing insight to preserve the intrinsic value of nature and not understand it in an exclusively instrumental way.

At the individual level, this conversion means, at least in the wealthier industrialised nations of the world, freeing oneself from the obsession with consumer goods. Being moderate does not mean having to do without or restrict oneself but is, rather, an invitation to think about what is essential and necessary: "*the virtue of moderation should be creative, intelligent and productive*"¹². "*Promoting the concept of moderation, therefore, has the aim not of diminishing but rather of supporting a higher quality of life and a greater reason to rejoice. It is not about renouncing the desire for material goods but of discerning and better distinguishing what is essential and what is superfluous and setting them in comparison with relational and spiritual richness.*"¹³

At the structural level, ecological conversion means moving away from an exclusively profit-oriented economy and towards a social, ecological economy oriented in particular to the common good and human flourishing.¹⁴ "*Economy, as the word indicates, should be the art of achieving a fitting management of our common home, which is the world as a whole.*" (EG 206)¹⁵

ECOLOGICAL TIME | Ecological conversion also means dealing with time differently, both as an individual and as a society. Instead of levelling time that flows away indiscriminately, we need to rediscover the "*rhythm of time*": the alternation between work and rest with Sunday as the commonly shared weekly day of rest, between the seasons, planting and harvesting times, between times of celebration and the time of fasting. The Christian annual cycle can provide orientation and assistance in rediscovering these rhythms.

12 Report to the Bishops of COMECE, "A Christian view on climate change - The implications of climate change for lifestyles and EU policies", Brussels, 2008., p.23

13 *ibid.*

14 COMECE "A European community of solidarity and responsibility. A statement of the COMECE bishops on the EU Treaty objective of a competitive social market economy", Brussels, 2012, p. 12. (available for download at <http://www.comece.eu/site/en/socialeconomicpolicies>)

15 Apostolic Exhortation "*Evangelii gaudium*" of Pope Francis to the bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful on the proclamation of the gospel in today's world. Vatican 2013. (http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)



A particular example of living according to the rhythms dictated by the natural calendar is the Catholic tradition of quarter tenses (ember days). The idea has its roots in the “*ieunia quattuor temporum*”, the period of fasting which marked the change of season. These ember days coincided with the beginning of Lent, Whitsun, Michaelmas and the beginning of Advent. The aim of ember days is to give God thanks for the gifts of creation, to remind people of them, to share them with everyone and particular with those in need. The Second Vatican Council spurred a revival of this tradition in some regions of the Church: it deserves to be more deeply rooted in the collective awareness of our communities.

Taking his cue from Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, Pope Francis has proclaimed September 1st as the “*Day of Creation*” and invited us, as Christians, to focus more on Creation and the responsibility arising from this during the time between September 1st and October 4th, the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi.

EDUCATION AS THE KEY TO CONVERSION | Conversion to an integral ecology, a different lifestyle and a sustainable way of life cannot simply be imposed or decreed. It requires reflection, exchange of experiences and adopting certain patterns of behaviour. Its key elements are dialogue and participation.

The Catholic Church, which is present throughout the world and at all levels with its educational institutions, from infant care to university, and non-formal learning establishments, can offer the platforms needed for the imparting of knowledge, dialogue and practising a different way of life.

It does not confine itself solely to the imparting of knowledge in this regard, rather it can also draw on the experience of the “*success of alternative, moderate forms of a comprehensively ecological life*” (e.g. in parishes, monasteries and religious communities) and make this experience accessible to others.

As “*comprehensive ecological education*”, it combines the imparting of knowledge with nobility of the heart: acting in an ecologically responsible manner is ultimately rooted in an “*ecological spirituality*” that feels connected with “*everything that is there and is living*” and is ultimately nourished and sustained by God.

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ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY | At its heart, this new ecological economics, alongside a new sensitivity to human involvement with other species, which Pope Francis calls in his encyclical *Laudato si'* an integral ecology, is also premised on an ecological spirituality. Just as the notion of a “*common home*” concerns all people equally, regardless of where they live or their cultural background, so too an “*ecological spirituality*” is fed by different cultures and a variety of religious traditions. The duty to protect creation and overcome hunger and poverty goes beyond confessional, religious or ideological boundaries; it is a duty we share and which presents us with a common challenge.

For Christians, the “*ecological conversion*” has a particular significance. It involves conversion to Jesus Christ, who said: “*Behold, I make all things new*” (Revelation 21, 5). That conversion, inspired by faith in a “*new earth*” (Revelation 21, 1), fosters a rather different view of the goods in life in comparison with one dominated by consumerism and an over-attachment to technologies. Such goods include:

1. Putting greater value on the Christian life of virtue, expressed in compassion for those who are suffering the worst impacts of climate change;
2. Being open to receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to guide decision-making in a low carbon economy and;
3. Celebrating the message of the Gospel with joy rather than with reluctance or apathy. “*May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope*” (LS 244)

In due time, this will make for the building of peace rather than conflict, a sharing of goods rather than exploitation of others in the name of profit, and proper attention to our created home with all the creatures in it – the Earth - which we all share in common.

Brussels/Paris, October 2015



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ANNEXE: CLIMATE PROTECTION IN PRAXIS EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES AND ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE CLIMATE PROTECTION AREA

Whenever the Church makes pronouncements on social questions such as the environment or climate protection, she must be prepared to have questions posed to her as well: *“Is the Church prepared to live by the standards she sets for politicians and for society more widely?”*

This annexe attempts to provide an initial review, limited in scope and yet displaying a rich diversity, of Church-inspired initiatives and activities in the area of climate protection and ecology. A quick web search reveals that, actually, there is a lot going on, but there is still a long way to go...

This overview must be understood as a *“work in progress”* and it is important that we be constantly up-dated. Please make sure to send us information or links to projects under way (secretariat@comece.eu). In that way the COMECE Secretariat can build up a data bank on Church-inspired environmental and climate protection projects on its website, thus making it available to more potential interested parties.

1. DIOCESES AND BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

At both the level of individual dioceses as well as at the level of national bishops' conferences a lot of initiatives are up and running, from reflection and strategic planning on ecological matters to practical measures which can even cross the threshold of the bishop's residence itself.

Example: “Environment Officer”

Some dioceses have decided to appoint a dedicated “environment officer” who can implement a variety of policies across a wide field. His/her task would be to raise awareness of environmental issues across the diocese and co-ordinate all the



practical environmental work within the local church.

- Diocesan environment officers – Germany, Austria
<http://www.schoepfung.at/content/site/home/aktuelles/index.html>
<http://www.kath-umweltbeauftragte.de>
- Awareness and networking of environmental activities within a bishops' conference: the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales - Great Britain
<http://www.cbcew.org.uk/CBCEW-Home/Departments/International-Affairs/Environment>
- Building up a network of environmental officers of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church - Ukraine (Kontakt über Renovabis: www.renovabis.de)

Further examples of implementation at the diocesan level:

- ASSISI (A Strategic, Systems-based, Integrated Sustainability Initiative) – Australia
<http://catholicearthcare.org.au/2015/03/assisi-initiative/>
- Project „Ökobilanz“ in the archdiocese of Munich - Germany
<https://www.erzbistum-muenchen.de/Dioezesanrat/Page035857.aspx>
- Tendering and awarding of a „Diocesan Environmental Award“ - Austria
<http://akn.graz-seckau.at/dioezesaner-umweltpreis?d=dioezesaner-umweltpreis-archiv#.Vi-C2tZTPMp>

Example: Climate-Neutral Katholikentag

Both at the planning and preparatory phase of the Katholikentag [A bi-ennial German Catholic festival, last held in Regensburg, May 2014] as well as during the event itself, an “*Environment pilot group*” of the KT organizing team sees to it that the KT (with more than ten thousand people in attendance) strives to meet sustainability standards. This means not only meeting these standards within the ranks of the organising team and those in attendance at the event, sourcing recycled/re-cyclable products for sale or use. It also means selecting partners and subcontractors on the spot who respect fair working conditions and are committed to the goal of sustainability.

- Climate neutral ‘Katholikentag’ - Germany
https://www.katholikentag.de/ueber_uns/klimateutraler_katholikentag.html

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2. PARISHES

Next to the private sector, parish communities are probably the best places where an individual (regardless of whether it is the parish priest/pastor, the sacristan, a young activist or a retired person, or indeed any member of the community) can be most active in a hands-on way. Imaginative projects or policies can involve a variety of groups, can be applied in all sorts of parish occasion or event, and can influence the purchase or sourcing of resources and goods used in day-to-day parish life.

Example: “Green Churches Action”

The “*Green Churches Action*” initiative stimulated an inexhaustible range of ideas and projects from candidate parishes. It is worth consulting the website just to see what individual parishes have come up with: their schemes can be inspiring for other communities. Many of the initiatives were in answer to questions such as: Do we buy products which have a bio- and fair trade certificate? Are our festive decorations in the parish re-cyclable/re-cycled? When we have a cinema evening in the parish, do we show films about the environment? Do we organise an annual “*Earth Day*”? Do we put on evening discussions on issues related to sustainability?

- Green Church Action – Canada
<http://www.egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/vert/>
- Towards a Green Church - Denmark
<http://www.gronkirke.dk/om/>

Further Examples of Parish-based initiatives:

- List of environmental initiatives from various church groups - Ireland
<http://www.workingnotes.ie/component/zoo/item/environmental-initiatives-by-church-groups-in-ireland>
- Environmental projects' dedicated team in parishes: energy-saving concepts, e-mobility for employees, Insect Hotel, eco-Kasperl-theater, excursions - eg. Austria
<http://www.pfarre-dechantskirchen.at/handeln.htm>
<http://pfarre-gratkorn.at/gruppen/umweltteam/>



- Regional bio-fair parish celebration - Germany
<https://www.erzbistum-muenchen.de/Dioezesanrat/Page035866.aspx>
- Churches and biodiversity - Germany
http://www.ecen.org/uploads-public/Biodiv_Kirchen_2013_web.pdf
- “Combles & Cloches” - Project to promote the settlement of bats in old storage and churches as a cooperation project in the archdiocese of Luxembourg - Luxembourg
http://www.environnement.public.lu/conserv_nature/publications/Hausflederm_lxbg1/Broschuere_Hausfledermaus_FR_030113_WEB.pdf
- The first “passive Church” (of course, only in the ecological sense ...) in Nowy Targ - Poland
http://www.mowimyjak.pl/encyklopedia/finanse-nieaktywna/najbardziej-ekologiczny-koscio-na-swiecie-gdzie-powsta-pierwszy-na-swiecie-koscio-pasywny.100_47847.html
- Priests with electrically-powered vehicles - Switzerland and Austria
http://www.dsp.at/sites/www.dsp.at/files/u181/Umwelt/rueckblick_2013.pdf
- Ecological conversion of the parish center in Čelovec: thermal insulation and heat-insulating window - Slovakia (contact via Renovabis)
- Sustainability Project Michigan – USA
<http://stfrancisa2.com/sustainability>
- «Urban gardening» Projekt der Pfarre St. Jakob in Klagenfurt
<http://www.zukunftforum3000.at/site/themen/umwelt/forum/article/209.html>
- *Solar and PV systems on community buildings, for example,*
 - > in Stip and Strumica – Macedonia (contact via Renovabis)
 - > in the cities of Rio Caldo, Terras de Bouro and Viana do Castelo, Alto Minho - Portugal
<http://www.cmjornal.xl.pt/nacional/portugal/detalhe/santuario-com-energia-solar.html>
http://rr.sapo.pt/informacao_detalhe.aspx?fid=1&did=76594

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- > in 43 different religious sites of the Diocese of Fréjus-Toulon - France
<http://www.varmatin.com/brignoles/les-eglises-du-var-converties-a-energie-solaire.2199382.html>
- > in the Beckerich community – Luxembourg
<http://www.klimabuendnis.lu/de/news/Neue-gemeinschaftliche-PV-Anlage-in-der-Gemeinde-Beckerich-1935-65.html>

3. MONASTERIES AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

It is frequently the case that religious communities and monasteries deliberately adopt a lifestyle which challenges mainstream society. Their lifestyle can legitimately be termed “*alternative*”. Their community homes can be an ideal laboratory for exemplary, experimental projects of ecological conversion.

It is not just the case that the form of life for which they have opted makes them pioneers of alternative living. Starting with how they design their building, on what economic principles they run the monastery/community as a business, or how they educate those committed to their charge, religious communities are in a position to launch and explore an endless range of ecological initiatives.

Example: “Sustainable Economy”

The brewery run by the Trappist monastery of Westvleteren (Belgium) has an understanding of sustainability which goes to the heart of the concept. The monks produce only as much beer as they need to keep the brewery in business and to finance the social projects which the abbey has decided to embrace and support. Only those private individuals who promise that they will not sell the beer commercially are permitted to buy beer direct from the abbey. (Unfortunately, in practice, theory and reality do not match ...)

- Sustainable economic concept of Trappist Abbey Brewery Westvleteren - Belgium
<http://sintsixtus.be/trial/bierverkoop/>



Further examples of implementation in religious communities:

Conversion measures

- Thermal remediation in Franciscan Friary Graz - Austria
<http://www.franziskaner-graz.at/kloster-renovierung/>
- Renovation of the Youth Centre of the Salesians in Nové Hradý: installation of an environmental water and wastewater system - Czech Republic (Contact via Renovabis)

Energy, agriculture

- Monastery Project for Renewable energy - Eco-Abbey Münsterschwarzach - Germany
<http://oeko.abtei-muensterschwarzach.de>
- Organic farming at the Plankstetten Abbey - Germany
<http://www.kloster-plankstetten.de/html/okologie.html>

Education and Spirituality

- Environmental Education of the Franciscans in Krakow according to the spirituality of St. Francis Assisi v -. Poland (contact via Renovabis)
- ZUK - Centre for Environment and Culture of Benediktbeuern (part of the Salesian Community) - Germany
<http://www.zuk-bb.de/zuk/home/>
- Umweltstation Kloster Ensdorf - Deutschland
<http://www.kloster-ensdorf.de/ueber-uns/bildungshaus/umweltstation-kloster-ensdorf/>
- Ecostream – global initiative of the Jesuits
<http://ecosj-stream.ecojesuit.com/blog/category/ecological-activity//about-us/>

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4. SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

The Church promotes ecological awareness and mainstreams sustainability in so many of its educational institutions – primary and secondary schools, third-level colleges and out-of-school programmes of adult/further/in-service education.

Example: “FOCSIV” – sustainable voluntary service

There exist many long-term development programmes which take on volunteers who are recruited through the Italian-based organisation FOCSIV. This umbrella organisation of Christian volunteer organisations insists on the pursuit of justice, peace and solidarity also in regard to creation.

FOCSIV – Italy: <http://www.focsiv.it>

Further examples of implementation in the education sector:

Schools

- “Education for Sustainable Development” with a religious-ethical-philosophical dimension of education in the “PILGRIM-schools” - Austria <http://pilgrim.at>

Theology and Ecology

- Environment Centre at the Theological Academy Ivano-Frankivsk - Ukraine (contact via Renovabis)
- Institute of Ecology and Religion in Užhorod - Ukraine (contact via Renovabis)
- Master Programme in Environmental Ethics at the Catholic Faculty of the University of Augsburg - Germany
<https://fachschaftumweltethik.wordpress.com>
- Scientific research project (2009-2012): FWF ProVision project on sustainability in monasteries - Austria and Germany
http://www.umweltbildung.at/cgi-bin/cms/nh_uni/award.pl?aktion=jury_detailansicht&ref=&id=187
- Environmental education as part of the Catholic Adult Education - Germany
<http://www.keb-bayern.de/Klimaschutz.html>
<https://www.keb-os.de/Default.aspx>



Education, Ecology and Social Integration

Many projects in central and eastern Europe focusing on ecological concerns link education, climate and environmental protection with social inclusion and inclusion of the disabled. (Most of these projects do not have either website or internet access, but further information is available from RENOVABIS, the organisation which acts in the name of the German Bishops' Conference in relation to central and eastern Europe: <https://www.renovabis.de>)

- Support of an Environmental Action of Middle School in Kornejewka: waste separation and waste recycling concept for Kornejewka and Osornoe - Kazakhstan (contact via Renovabis)
- “Natura 2000”: environmental protection, social inclusion of disabled people and commitment of Catholic Volunteers in Budy Glogowskie - Poland (contact via Renovabis)
- Support of an ecological laundry of the center for social and professional reintegration of people with disabilities in Dej - Romania (Contact via Renovabis)
- Promotion of the sustainable regional development through an holistic project approach in the area of the Tiszafüred parish - Hungary (Contact via Renovabis)

Ecumenical Initiatives on Environmental Questions

Climate protection and the environment are areas in which the Christian churches have been working together across the confessional boundaries for many years. What matters for inter-religious environmental projects is the shared conviction that we have a collective responsibility for our common home which crosses the borders of our religious divisions.

- European Christian Environmental Network – EU
<http://www.ecen.org>
- International ecumenical pilgrimage for climate justice from Flensburg via Trier to Paris, ahead of the Climate Change Conference 2015 - Germany, France, ...
<http://www.klimapilgern.de>

- „Reclaim Christmas Campaign“ – England
<http://operationnoah.org>
- “Transition écologique et sociétale” - France
<http://www.eglise.catholique.fr/eglise-et-societe/developpement-durable/381726-transition-ecologique-societale/>
- -> COP 21 Eglise catholique
<http://www.eglise.catholique.fr/actualites/dossiers/cop21/>
- “The Summit Of Conscience For Climate” Paris 2015, France
<http://www.justpax.va/content/giustiziaepace/en/archivio/interventions/2015/the-summit-of-conscience-for-climate---paris--21-july-2015.html>
- WhyDoICare Campaign
<https://www.whydroicare.org/en>
- Publications under the liturgically oriented, ecumenical project ‘*Creation Time*’ in the archdiocese of Luxembourg - Luxembourg
<http://www.wort.lu/de/lokales/schoepfungszeit-2015-in-luxemburg-leben-wir-im-paradies-55eedaa20c88b46a8ce5f9fa>
- Environmental projects as part of “72 hours without compromise” of KJ Initiative - Austria
<https://www.72h.at>
- Common pilgrimage of organic farmers and producers of organic products in the Sanctuary of Jasna Góra (Częstochowa) - Poland
<http://www.jasnagora.com/wydarzenie-1380>
- „Stop Climate Chaos Initiative“ - Scotland
<http://www.stopclimatechaos.org>
- Organisation „Ethics & Energy“ – Sweden
<http://etikochenergi.se>

