

**ANTILLES EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE
PASTORAL LETTER**

**CARING FOR THE EARTH – OUR RESPONSIBILITY
AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION**

“Earth reminded us of a Christmas tree ornament hanging in the blackness of space. As we got farther and farther away it diminished in size. Finally, it shrank to the size of a marble, the most beautiful marble you can imagine.

That beautiful, warm, living object looked so fragile, so delicate...Seeing this has to change a person, has to make a person appreciate the creation of God and the love of God”.¹ (Astronaut James Irwin)

I INTRODUCTION

1. We, the Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference, recognise our duty to reflect with Catholics, other Christians, and indeed with peoples of other faiths in the Caribbean, on matters that affect all our lives.

2. On November 30th 2003, we issued two Pastoral Letters, one “Justice and Peace Shall Embrace: Crime And Violence”, and another on “Stewardship And The Revitalization of Parish Life in the Caribbean”. In the latter we looked at the notion of stewardship insofar as it pertained to the building up of our parish communities. We were well aware that we were seeing stewardship, i.e. use of time, talent and treasure, in a restricted sense, i.e. building up of parish communities. We knew that stewardship was a much wider concept. Hence, we wrote the following: “The truth is that all human beings are called to be stewards, stewards of God’s gift of creation, the primary sacrament of His love. To thankfully take responsibility for the integrity of creation is an important part of what it means to be made in God’s image.² We constantly need to be reminded, and to proclaim to the world: ‘The earth and its fullness belong to the Lord, the world and all that dwell in it’ (Ps 24:1). We are all in the world not as owners but as tenants and stewards. The specifically Christian dimension of stewardship

¹ “The Home Planet”, Ed. Kevin W. Kelly, 1988, p.38

must include this responsibility for the integrity of creation, for our environment”.³ It is stewardship in this wider sense, i.e. the care for creation, which we concentrate on in this Letter.

3. We acknowledge that there are ecological issues that are complex and open to conflicting interpretations. Hence we encourage those who are expert in the various disciplines connected with ecology, the ethics of ecology and the theology of ecology to engage in serious reflection. We look forward to the fruits of such reflection.
4. There will be three main sections to this Letter. First, we will consider an overview of the present urgent issues affecting the well being of our part of the world. The following quotation summarizes well the challenge that lies before us: *“As the 21st century unfolds it seems likely that there will be a real threat, for the first time ever, to the habitability of the earth-the very propensity of the planet to support life, which is something we have taken for granted for as long as there has been human consciousness”*⁴. Secondly, we will try to explore the ecological, biblical and theological implications for our responsibilities towards Mother Earth. Finally, we will look at measures that ought to be undertaken as we all strive to exercise our responsibilities towards our planet.

II ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION

5. Though we will concentrate on the Caribbean region we are mindful that we are part of a planet. The degradation of our planet has exercised the minds of many throughout the world. “Nature has been damaged to an unprecedented degree”.⁵ Pope John Paul II referred to the ‘ecological crisis as a moral problem’.⁶ In their Pastoral Letter “The Call To Creation: God’s Invitation And The Human Response: The Natural Environment And Catholic Social Teaching”, August, 2002, the Catholic Bishops in England and Wales identified four main areas of degradation; (i) damage to the earth’s life sustaining processes; (ii) depletion of the world’s

² cf Gen. 1, especially 26-31

³ Stewardship and the Revitalisation of Parish Life In The Caribbean, Antilles Episcopal Conference, Nov. 30, 2003, # 26-27

⁴ Michael McCarthy, environmental Editor of the Independent, “Planet earth – its fate in our hands”, The Tablet, February 21st 2004.

⁵ Johan De Tavernier, Ecology and Ethics, Louvain Studies 19 (1994) p 235.

⁶ Pope John Paul II, Message for the Celebration of World Day of Peace, Jan 1, 1990, p 6.

natural resources; (iii) the impact on the world's poor; (iv) the loss of beauty and diversity. Undesirable human behaviour with respect to the environment has consequences for Earth that are irreversible.⁷

6. The United Nations has also been trying to deal with environmental degradation, establishing the intimate relationship between the concepts of 'environment' and 'development', as far back as 1972.⁸ In 1992 at the Rio de Janeiro United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, otherwise known as the Earth Summit, it was indicated that the special situations and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most vulnerable, shall be given special priority. Special mention was made of the needs of the Small Island Developing States. The UN Conference stressed the need to pursue development without compromising the ability of future generations to develop. It pledged to be mindful of development's stress on the planet's beauty as well as resources, and to respect all other species as well as our own in future generations. Such development is known as 'Sustainable Development'. The Rio Declaration, Principle I, stated "human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature". We also call attention to The Earth Charter which originated in the United Nations. This is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century⁹
7. In consideration of the special characteristics of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), a UN conference that focused on their needs was convened in Barbados in 1994. By and large Caribbean countries are SIDS although there is nothing small about Cuba and Guyana. This meeting resulted in the Barbados Programme Of Action (BPOA) to which SIDS committed and pledged to protect biodiversity, especially marine biodiversity, avoid emissions which would increase the risk of global warming and its consequences on sea level rise, reduce and avoid pollution, promote intelligent waste management, and generally secure a happy and fulfilling life for their citizens without raping the environment and its limited

⁷ cf John De Tavemier, Ecology and Ethics, p 237.

⁸ cf United Nations Conference on The Human Environment, Stockholm.

⁹ cf. Website: [http:// www. earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org) for the text of The Earth Charter

ability to sustain life. That conference highlighted fifteen areas of concern. SIDS was charged with the implementation of BPOA. Some of these concerns will appear in this Letter.

8. During January 10-14, 2005 a review of the Barbados Programme of Action was undertaken at a United Nations sponsored international meeting in Mauritius. Several key persons from CARICOM participated. The Mauritius Strategy repeated the need to implement the Programme of Action and added to the 15 areas of concern the issue of the brain drain (the emigration of skilled labour to greener pastures), which is so damaging for SIDS given the limited pool of trained personnel. This could be considered the most important social vulnerability for SIDS.
9. **Human Poverty:** Before giving examples of these areas of concern we highlight the injustice of human poverty.¹⁰ This is so because human beings constitute an integral part of the environment, the destruction of which impacts negatively especially on the poor. At the very heart of sustainable development is the quality of life of our people. Signs of these injustices are indicated by the levels of poverty and unemployment in the region. Statistics for the region are sketchy. In Trinidad and Tobago (1990-2000) 12.4% of the population earned US\$1 a day, 39% earned US\$2 a day. In Jamaica for the same period 13.3% of the population earned US\$2 a day. There were no figures for Haiti in this report.¹¹ In Dominica unemployment had risen from 14.9% in 1990 to 23.1% in 1997. Again there were no statistics for Haiti.¹²
10. **Climate Change:** One of the most disturbing factors for us in the region is the phenomenon of global warming. It seems likely that in the present century global warming will cause average global temperatures to rise, some say, by between 1.4c and 5.8c. This rise could impact disproportionately on poor countries. Global warming and consequent sea level rise, higher sea surface temperatures, increased precipitation, changes in wind and ocean currents, can have a serious impact on the sustainable development of Caribbean Small Island Developing States. Low lying states depend on the protective barriers of coral reefs, sea grass beds and

¹⁰ cf Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace, Jan. 1, 1990, #11

¹¹ UNDP, Human Development Report 2003, p 245-246.

¹² Caribbean Development Bank, Social and Economic Indicators, 2001.

mangroves which offer protection to coastlands, anchorages, beaches, buildings and costal infrastructure. Global warming and its subsequent increase in sea levels will also compromise these states' ability to provide food directly (fisheries), and indirectly, through salt water intrusion, will impact negatively on employment, (e.g. tourism, fishing, recreation) and building materials. The natural protection of coastal defences from reefs and mangroves will be needed most in the face of sea level rise and in the escalation in the frequency and intensity of tropical storms and hurricanes, to which we are highly vulnerable. Limited human and financial resources pose a significant challenge for our states to address global climate change. Tropical storms and hurricanes cause scarce resources earmarked for development projects to be diverted to relief and re-construction. Increase in the number and intensity of storms have caused major coastal erosions in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In some parts of north windward 25 meters of shoreline have receded. Hurricane Lenny destroyed 10 meters of coastal forests there.¹³ Many people have died in the region from hurricanes and other natural disasters.

11. Along with sea level rise, global warming brings with it coastal flooding, salt water intrusion into ground wells, changes in weather patterns, increase in frequency and severity of thunder storms and increases in diseases such as malaria. The year 2004 brought exceptional damage to property and tragic loss of life due to flooding caused in part by tropical storms. It is predicted that the Caribbean will get wetter dry seasons and drier rainy seasons. Overall there may be less rainfall and therefore higher levels of drought. Rainfall levels in the region have been dropping consistently for years, but when it does rain it is torrential and damaging.¹⁴
12. Global warming is, to a significant extent, the result of the burning of fossil fuels which produces an increase in greenhouse gasses (e.g. carbon dioxide and methane), which in turn creates a layer in the atmosphere that prevents heat from escaping into the atmosphere. We recall the summer of 2003 as being the hottest in many years, not only here in the Caribbean, but also in Europe and

¹³ UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the SIDS Programme of Action; Agenda 21, The Road to Johannesburg, 2002.

¹⁴ cf Dr. Ulric Trotz, Environmental Scientist, former Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University of Guyana, The Daily Nation, October 31st, 2003.

in the Middle East. The death rate in many countries was alarming and in France it was reported that several thousands died.

13. It was precisely to control the amount of greenhouse gasses throughout the world that the United Nations created the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention On Climate Change (UNFCCC). This Protocol is binding on developed countries only and seeks the commitment of these countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 55% of 1990 levels. The United States of America, which produces $\frac{1}{4}$ of the world's emissions, along with Australia, have refused to sign the Protocol, which, thank God, came into effect (February 16, 2005) with Russia signing it. It is to be noted that the Caribbean collectively produces less than 1% of greenhouse gasses, which, nonetheless, is too much. Yet we stand to suffer damage to a substantial and disproportionate degree.
14. **Energy usage:** Fossil fuels have traditionally been the main source of energy in the Caribbean, but burning of these fuels, such as oil and gas, have contributed to the greenhouse gas effect of global warming. Fossil fuels are still being used to generate electricity and in the transportation sector (cars, other land based vehicles, aeroplanes). Apart from their impact on global warming, the particular matter that is produced by combustion of these substances has been implicated in many respiratory illnesses. Furthermore the importation of fossil fuels contributes largely to the depletion of foreign exchange in most of our countries.
15. Over and above greenhouse gasses, which prevent heat from escaping into the atmosphere, is the phenomenon of the **Ozone Hole**. The ozone is a protective layer of gas high in the earth's atmosphere. Its function is to reduce penetration of the harmful ultra violet rays from the sun. The ozone layer is becoming increasingly thin especially at polar regions and more specifically in Antarctica. The general trend in this thinning seems to be that it is starting earlier, lasting longer, and is deepening. It is due to changes in meteorological conditions in the lower atmosphere over Antarctica as well as chemicals such as chlorofluorocarbon (CFCs) contained in some aerosols and refrigerators. The thinning of the ozone layer allows the harmful ultra violet rays from the sun to reach the earth's surface, causing skin cancer and destroying tiny

plants.¹⁵ Thankfully the implementation of the Montreal Protocol has been successful in phasing out ozone-depleting substances. For example, Trinidad and Tobago has completely phased out usage of CFCs and is now utilising ozone-friendly substances. However, it is predicted that it will take another fifty years for the ozone hole to close. It is imperative that, in spite of the success in reducing the chemical emissions, we be alert to the introductions of new chemicals, which will further harm the ozone layer.

16. **Caribbean Sea:** One of our great treasures is the Caribbean Sea, which possesses a diversity of life that is increasing daily as new species are being discovered. The Caribbean Sea is a source of food, employment, protection from storms, aesthetics, recreation, and transport and is an excellent place for interdependence of live organisms living in harmony with nature. Yet our Caribbean sea is fast becoming a locus for the unpleasant solid and liquid waste so characteristic of urban and rural life.
17. **Coral Reefs** are some of our greatest treasures. They themselves are living beings and are teeming with other life. These reefs are a natural protection against storms and hurricanes, provide a livelihood for Caribbean residents, are home for a wide variety of living organisms, and are an attraction for tourists. Our reefs are vulnerable to global warming, disease and human activity. The harvesting of coral (Jamaica), the use of bleach (Bahamas) and dynamite (Jamaica) to harvest fish, negatively affect our reefs. Coral is also damaged from anchorages (Barbados), fishing equipment, by divers and others who walk on the corals.¹⁶
18. Whereas there are differences in scientific findings,¹⁷ studies indicate a drastic destruction of coral reefs in the Caribbean as is evidenced in Tobago where Buccoo Reef is severely damaged. There does not seem to be any evidence that this destruction is coming to an end, and it is likely that the destruction will continue for some years to come. Reefs rarely ever recover, and in death

¹⁵ Michael Proffitt, World Meteorological Organisation, The Barbados Advocate, September 23rd, 2003.

¹⁶ UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, The SIDS Programme of Action.

¹⁷ The Journal Science, containing a report prepared by the University East Anglia, and the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, July 2003, and The Smithsonian Journal Atoll Research Bulletin, containing a report of a study undertaken at the University of Miami, July 2003.

often become covered with algae and other micro-organisms. Hard coral is necessary since it is the substance on which soft corals like sea fans and other species are able to grow. Loss of coral could lead to collapse of reef and mangrove fisheries, reduction in tourism and increased coastal damage from hurricanes.¹⁸

19. **Oil Spills** pollute seacoasts. Thousands of vessels transporting oil, gas, and chemicals, pass through the Caribbean Sea annually. The discharge of solid waste, wastewater, and bilge water by commercial and cruise ships pollute our mangrove and sandy coasts. All nations are signatories to the MARPOL Convention and the 1989 Basel Convention on Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their disposal, but none have signed the Basel Protocol on Liability and Compensation.¹⁹ It is not unusual for ships to run aground damaging coral reefs and releasing corrosive and fouling chemicals. It is to be noted that cruise ships now carry as many as 3600 passengers that is the equivalent of a floating 1500 room hotel. When such ships anchor in sea grass and their passengers snorkel, touching the edge of coral patch, damage can be done to the fragile ecosystem.²⁰
20. **Over fishing:** Trawlers from Japan and Taiwan over the years destroyed wide areas of our seabeds and depleted our deep-sea natural resources and fish stock. The problem is increased by over fishing by our local fisher folk in the absence of stock structures analyses, stock assessment and management plans. A case in point is the depletion of the stock of sea eggs in Barbados, which is due to over harvesting. The Barbados government had been forced to ban such harvesting for a number of years and now regulates the harvesting.
21. **Nuclear Waste:** Shipments have been passing through the Caribbean Sea for a number of years in spite of protests from Caribbean governments and the Church. These shipments of re-processed nuclear wastes originate in France, are usually transported on British freighters and end up in Japan. A report in January 2004, from San Juan, Puerto Rico indicated that such a shipment had recently passed through the Caribbean Sea. Though British Nuclear Fuels insisted that the shipments do not pose a risk,

¹⁸ cf The Barbados Advocate, July 20th 2003, and December 3rd 2003.

¹⁹ cf SIDS Programme of Action.

²⁰ cf Tourism and Coastal Resources Degradation in the Wider Caribbean: a Study by Island Resources Foundation, St. Thomas, VI, December, 1996.

the possibility of environmental disaster occurring continues to be real.²¹ At a high level meeting of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), held in the Bahamas in February 2004, the decision was taken to oppose the transportation of radioactive materials through the Caribbean region.²² On September 27th, 2001 we, the Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference, issued a statement strongly urging that such shipments be stopped and we appealed to the Catholic Bishops in the England and Wales as well as those in France to support our appeal.

22. **Our Land:** There are competing interests in our territories for housing, tourism facilities and agriculture. These interests often conflict. There has been a growing loss of agricultural land which poses a serious concern as we ought to be trying to feed our people. Unnecessary importation of food and drink makes a dent in our foreign exchange ability. In many of our territories the cost of land and housing is beyond the reach of low-income groups. Some of our nations suffer from land degradation, soil erosion, and desertification. The UN Convention to Combat Desertification attempts to address land degradation and desertification and the Secretariat is providing assistance to countries to meet their commitments under this Convention.
23. **Trees** are vitally important for the well being of our planet and for the health of people. They remove carbon dioxide (the most abundant greenhouse gas) from the atmosphere and convert it into oxygen which animals need for respiration. In the process carbon is sequestered into trees as wood. Carbon sequestration is one of the most important functions trees perform in the global environment. Trees cool the area, by giving shade and actually lowering the temperature, and their roots help to bind the soil, preventing erosion. Trees can save energy consumption and refresh the human spirit, especially in cities. Trees provide a habitat for birds and some animals and provide an atmosphere which is conducive to mental health. Unfortunately, quite often trees are cut and used for fuel and for developmental purposes. Forests naturally purify drinking water by filtering pollutants, reducing landslides, and in some cases capture and store water.²³ Deforestation destroys the habitat of a variety of beautiful species. Biodiversity everywhere is

²¹ cf The Barbados Advocate, February 4th, 2004.

²² cf The Barbados Advocate, February 3rd, 2004.

²³ The Nation, September 9th and October 20th 2003.

vital for the ecological balance of the entire planet. Commenting on problems mentioned above, Lester Brown indicated that global warming is eating up the earth's natural resources at a far faster rate than they can be renewed. We are releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere faster than the earth can absorb it (greenhouse effect). We are cutting trees faster than they can grow. Soil erosion exceeds new soil formation. We are taking fish from the ocean faster than they can reproduce.²⁴ Our modern society, economy and lifestyles are unsustainable.

24. **Waste Dumping:** Illegal and indiscriminate dumping desecrates the beauty of nature. It is not unusual to see fast-food boxes, plastic cups, food containers, and scraps of paper in public places, as well as mattresses and old cars in gullies, all of which can breed disease and contaminate aquifers and drinking water. Discarded tyres, stoves, refrigerators, galvanise sheets, and tin cans, also found in gullies, pose a potential danger for increasing airborne diseases during the rainy season.
25. **Solid Waste:** Our landfills can pose a threat to the environment, especially when cans, aluminium foil, plastics and other non-biodegradable materials are dumped there. It is estimated that in landfills, decomposing garbage produces carbon dioxide and methane, two greenhouse gasses. Non-biodegradable materials such as tin, aluminium and other metals take 100 to 500 years to degenerate. Seepage from these landfills may reach the water table and contaminate the ground water supply.
26. **Liquid Waste** management is inadequate in many parts of the region. As a result liquid waste, including detergents (with nitrates and phosphates) and sewage, impacts negatively on humans through polluting rivers, beaches, and the sea. Inadequate liquid waste management can also lead to the death of coral and other vital marine life. It can also contaminate surface and ground water supplies.²⁵

²⁴ Lester Brown, President and Founder of the Washington based Earth Policy Institute, under the heading of Plan B: Rescuing A Planet Under Stress, and A Civilisation In Trouble. (cf The Barbados Advocate, September 8th, 2003).

²⁵ cf SIDS Programme of Action.

27. **Fresh Water:** “The world is in a water crisis that will grow more acute and devastating in the coming years unless governments start giving higher priority to developmental and investment plans...climate change during this century with rainy seasons becoming shorter and more intense in some regions and droughts longer in other areas could imperil species and crops and occasion a decline in food production globally. Hence, an escalation in food prices and costly imports for water scarce countries.”²⁶
28. In the context of the above, the United Nations Commission on Water has declared Barbados and Haiti as water scarce countries. In territories where tourism is a major source of revenue, conflicting interests for the use of water for irrigation, industry, urban domestic consumers, golf courses, and other tourism purposes put a stress on our water system. The problem is aggravated by the pollution of our rivers. Many times waste is dumped in gullies and rivers, and hazardous chemicals resulting from increased development also find their way into our rivers. So do fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides and other harmful chemicals used in agriculture. Land based pollution which finds its way into our rivers can give rise to gastroenteritis, diarrhoea, jaundice and rashes.²⁷

III SOME REASONS FOR CONCERTED ACTION:

29. The most obvious and practical reason for concern is the well being of the entire community of life on the planet, a community that includes our children and grandchildren. In order for us to survive and to enjoy the bread which the earth gives and the fruit of the vine, the products of human hands,²⁸ it is necessary that the ecological systems be protected. Yet humans are shutting down the life support systems of our planet through the pollution of water, air, and soil. Since the habitability of the earth, our only home, is being called into question, care for our planet will surely be the central issue for us. At the same time there is a much more fundamental reason for concerted action, that is, the moral reason.

²⁶ William Cosgrove, Vice President of the World Water Council, speaking at the Third World Water Forum in Japan, March 2003, (cf Barbados Advocate, April 4th, 2003).

²⁷ cf SIDS Programme of Action.

²⁸ cf Offertory Prayers in the Roman Eucharist.

30. As mentioned above, Pope John Paul II, looking at the entire world, stated that the ecological crisis is a moral problem.²⁹ The exploitation of the resources of the earth as well as pollution of the atmosphere are due to a large extent to humans' unethical treatment of the rest of creation. *It is vital that our fundamental attitude to human and non-human nature be transformed.*

Elements for a Contemporary Christian Spirituality

31. Vatican Council II reminded us that created things have their own laws and values which human beings are to learn (cf. The Church in the Modern World, # 36). By close observation we are able to recognize these laws and values. a) There is incredible diversity and beauty on our planet. No two creatures are identical. Each is unique. b) All creatures exist in relationship with other creatures. They exist in interdependence and interconnection. Nothing exists separately and in isolation. c) Amid such diversity and interconnection, all creatures have their own unique qualities and innate worth. Though nothing exists independently, each being has value of its own. The universe cries out to us humans to accept, nurture and celebrate this diversity, beauty, interdependence and the innate worth of all creatures and in this way preserve the natural order of creation. We will refer to these laws and values later in this document.

God And His World

32. The early chapters of the book of Genesis provide the starting point for a Judeo-Christian view of the world. We wish to clearly state at the beginning that we do not see any conflict between the creation stories in Genesis and the scientific theory of evolution. The creation stories do not pretend to offer any scientific explanation for the origin of the world and its creatures. They do however provide us with a number of theological insights.
33. The Judeo-Christian interpretation of the creation story is that the world and every thing in it were made by God, is sustained by Him, and belongs to Him. This truth is expressed by both Jews and Christians in praying the Psalms.³⁰ "The earth and its fullness belong to God. The world and all that dwell in it". (Ps 24, 1). God

²⁹ cf Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace, January 1st. 1990.

³⁰ Psalm 95, especially v 3-5; Ps 33 especially v 6-7; Ps 65:6-13; Ps 104; Is 66:1-2

is sovereign of all that exists and has instilled in every creature, including humans, laws and purposes which must be observed.

Human Beings And Every Other Creature

34. There is a basic goodness in human beings and every other creature (“and God saw that it was very good” Gen 1:31) since everything has come from the hand of God. Human beings must be seen together with every creature as integral parts of creation. Every creature, including human beings, comes from the ‘soil of the earth’ (cf. Gen. 2). This theological insight helps us to see a dynamic and intimate link between humans and every other creature and the earth itself. Nonetheless human beings hold a unique place in creation. We have been created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26) and share in God’s faculty of intelligence. We are to use this intelligence in exercising our dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:28) but with wisdom and love.³¹ Put another way, we are to use our intelligence along with the gifts given by the Holy Spirit to complete and perfect God’s work of creation through our work with a view to the betterment of society, and that of the whole of creation.³² We are to cultivate the Garden of Eden and take care of it (Gen. 2:15) as well as promote harmony between humanity and the rest of nature. All of “nature has its own operating rules and self-recuperation which human beings must respect as much as possible”.³³ Pope John Paul II said that when it comes to the natural world we are subjected not only to biological laws, but also to moral ones which cannot be violated with impunity.³⁴

In summary, God owns His world. We are responsible members of God’s community of life, answerable to God on how we exercise our responsibility to the rest of creation. The contrasting parables of the rich fool and the faithful steward (cf. Luke 12, 13-21; 41-48) seem applicable for our prayerful reflection in this regard.

35. The question has been raised about the value of non-human nature. Traditionally, we have regarded other forms of nature as having value only insofar as they are useful for us humans. However, an

³¹ Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace, 1990, #3

³² Vatican Council II, The Church, 1965, #41.

³³ Johan De Tavernier, Ecology And Ethics, pg 240.

³⁴ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 30th December, 1987, #34.

ecological worldview sees all forms of life as having their own worth and not just a usefulness for humans. “Varieties of animals and plants are not only important insofar as they (now or in the future) have utility or optional usefulness for people, but also possess an inherent quality....not only human but also non-human life have an intrinsic worth.... there is a certain right to life for everything and everyone”.³⁵ “At the heart of the deepest feelings of those who care for the fate of the planet is a sense that the earth is seen as having its own wondrous and absolute value independent of us; our duty is to live in harmony with it”.³⁶

36. Moreover, from human observation we know that “all forms of life modify their contexts, the most spectacular and benign instance is doubtless the coral polyp. By serving its own ends it has created a vast undersea world favourable to thousands of other kinds of animals and plants”.³⁷ This is indicative of a certain unity and inter-dependence among creatures. If one species is harmed or destroyed, other species suffer. Moreover, interdependence of the various ecosystems and the importance of their balance are necessary for human survival.
37. We err when we isolate one of the creation stories in the Book of Genesis. Each story has its own emphasis but it is imperative that we see them in relationship to one another. Such an isolation of the creation story in Genesis 1 may well have led to humans’ exploitation of other forms of nature springing from a false notion of the relationship between humans and the rest of creation. Hence in Genesis 1 “the human person is presented as the last of God’s creation, and thus its crown. Humanity receives the mandate of creation; the submission of the earth and lordship over nature. Moreover humanity alone bears the image of God. On this account, creation is thus for humanity the permission to do what it wills in order to further its own honour and glory”.³⁸ It seems clear that ‘dominion’ as found in Genesis 1 must be seen in the context of other parts of Genesis, especially Genesis 7 (the Flood). God’s mandate to Noah is to see to the survival of all the other living

³⁵ Johan De Tavernier, *Ecology And Ethics*, pg 254-255.

³⁶ Michael McCarthy “Planet earth – its fate is in our hands”.

³⁷ L. White, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, pg 25.

³⁸ Johan De Tavernier, *Ecology And Ethics*, pg 245-246, referring to L. White: “Continuing the Conversation”, in Barbour (ed.)

Western Man and Environmental Ethics, 58

creatures. God's commission to humankind is "to protect the balance of life that God's ordering word has built into the earth and to promote the continuation of all species having a place in that delicate balance".³⁹

The Rebellion Of Human Beings And Its Consequences

38. Though there is a basic goodness in human beings and in every other creature (cf # 34 above), there is a certain tendency in each human being to sin. And so our experience is one of sin, of rebellion against God's sovereignty, against our responsibility in caring for one another and for the rest of creation. Humans seized God's sovereignty over the rest of creation and proceeded to exploit and destroy it. "We are not, in our hearts, part of the natural process. We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim".⁴⁰ We adopted a callous disregard for the laws and values that govern nature itself.⁴¹ As a result we have placed a large percentage of the human family in a state of destitution and our planet in a perilous situation.
39. Every creature on earth (human beings and all other creatures) is involved in the mysteries of the incarnation and redemption. In the incarnation God united himself in some way with the whole of creation. As we said above, all creatures, humans and otherwise, were 'made from the soil', i.e. they are flesh. In Christ God entered into unity, not only with human beings, but also with the entire visible and material world. As a result, humans and all creation have been raised to a new dignity.⁴² Because of the rebellion about which we spoke above, all of creation, humans and others, was in need of reconciliation with God and with one another, and restoration⁴³. This reconciliation and restoration of all creation was achieved through Jesus' resurrection. "In the transfiguration of the risen body of Christ begins the transfiguration of every creature,

³⁹ "And God Saw That It Was Very Good: Catholic Theology and the Environment", edited by Drew Christiansen S.J. and Walter Grazer; United States Catholic Conference, 1996. Article entitled Foundations for a Catholic Ecological Theology of God by Anne M Clifford CSJ. P.27 & 28

⁴⁰ L. White, The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis, Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology , ch 3 , p 33

⁴¹ cf. Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace, 1990, # 5

⁴² John Paul II, Dominum et Vivicanten, 18th May, 1986, #50

⁴³ Romans 8: 19-23

the ‘new creation’ in which all creation will be transformed”⁴⁴ The new creation refers to the new heaven and the new earth when all creation will be in harmony, ordered as it will be according to God’s plan.⁴⁵ We all have a role to play in preparing for this new heaven and this new earth. This we do by making our present world a better place for humans and for the rest of creation. The passage in Hebrews 13, 14: “for there is no lasting city for us here on earth; we are looking for the city which is to come” is no justification for us to neglect our earthly duties while waiting passively for the world to come. The teaching of Pope John Paul II, i.e. that the transfiguration of every creature, humans and others, began with the transfiguration of the risen body of Christ, re-enforces the idea that there is an integral relationship (connectedness) between humans and the rest of creation.

40. **Universal Purpose:** The universal purpose of created things includes natural resources, natural, spiritual, intellectual and technological goods necessary for the integral development of all peoples.⁴⁶ God has entrusted the whole of His creation to the human family to be cared for as explained in # 34 above. All of creation constitutes a unique patrimony of humanity.⁴⁷ Every man, woman and child in the world has a strict right to find in the world all that they need for their spiritual and material development. No one individual and no one nation have the right to possess more than they need when others lack the basic necessities of life.⁴⁸ It is for human beings, while respecting the integrity of all creation, to use their intelligence to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of natural and manufactured goods. The present condition of the opulence of some and the destitution of others is against the plan of God.⁴⁹ Harmony between humans and nature will be restored only when people determine to ‘be more’ rather than ‘have more’.⁵⁰ This discussion on the equitable distribution of

⁴⁴ John Paul II, Address to Flemish speaking youth, Germany, March 31st, 1989 (cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace “From Stockholm to Johannesburg: An Historical Overview of the Concern of the Holy See for the Environment 1972-2002”, 2002, p 36).

⁴⁵ Rev 21: 1-4; 2 Peter 3, 13-14

⁴⁶ The intervention of the Holy See at the Rio Conference, June 4th, 1992.

⁴⁷ Synod of Bishops, Justice In The World, Rome, 1971, ch 1&2.

⁴⁸ cf Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 26th March 1967, #23.

⁴⁹ Vatican Council II, *The Church In The Modern World*, 1965, #69.

⁵⁰ *Intervention Of The Holy See, Stockholm, June 7th, 1972.*

natural resources depends on our eyes being open to the human exploitation of the natural resources and our determination to reverse the trend. Moreover basic resources of air and water must be available to humans and other forms of life as well.

41. Natural Resources: Natural resources are not only limited, but also some are non-renewable. Hence the need to respect the integrity and cycles of nature. We are to respect the order inherent to the natural world.⁵¹ We cannot use with impunity the different categories of being, that is, animals, plants and natural elements. We are to consider the nature of each being and its mutual connection in an ordered system.⁵²
42. It is important to see in creation the image of the Creator and a first manifestation of God's love.⁵³ Since creation reflects and reveals the creator, it was given to us for our admiration and contemplation.⁵⁴ Our response to God's gift of creation ought to be one of gratitude to God and to creation, and the determination to care for and preserve the beauty of creation. From such gratitude there flows generosity on our part, leading us to share with others our knowledge and technology.⁵⁵

IV THE WAY FORWARD:

The Church

43. As Catholic Bishops in the Caribbean, we are taking seriously the signs that seem to indicate that the habitability of the earth is being called into question. At the end of the Jubilee Year, Pope John Paul II issued his Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, in which he warned us: "how can we remain indifferent to the prospect of an ecological crisis which is making vast areas of our planet uninhabitable and hostile to humanity" (#51). We intend to make this a central concern in our pastoral ministry, fully cognisant of its moral implications. The ecological crisis could well be the greatest moral problem of this century. As a consequence, the Church has

⁵¹ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, December 30, 1987, # 34

⁵² *ibid* # 34

⁵³ Pope Paul VI to World Wildlife Fund, June 21st- 1969 (cf. Pontifical Council For Justice and Peace, *From Stockholm to Johannesburg: An Historical Overview of the Concern of the Holy See for the Environment 1972-2002*, 2002, p 17)

⁵⁴ *Apostolic Letter To Youth for International Youth Year*, March 31st, 1985, #14.

⁵⁵ Pope John Paul II, homily at Living History Farm, #2.

an urgent task of educating the peoples of the Caribbean on the ecological challenges in the region (part II of this Pastoral Letter), as well as the proper relationship between God, human beings and all other creatures (part III). We must stress in clear terms the nature of the human person as well as an accurate understanding of the other creatures. Human beings are called by God to appreciate the worth of other creatures and to observe the laws that God has put in nature itself, as described above. As responsible members of God's creation, we recognise that creation belongs not to us but to God, and that God has entrusted to us the care and the use of creation in accordance with His plan.

44. The Church has at its disposal many avenues for education. Throughout the region we operate a large number of primary and secondary schools. Over and above that we conduct catechetical classes for children and youth who do not attend our schools. We have a variety of youth organisations. Every Sunday a homily is given during the Eucharistic Celebration. We conduct a variety of seminars and workshops which bring people together. We have relationships with other Christian Churches in Christian Councils throughout the region. In some of our territories there are inter-faith organisations. Working in conjunction with other Christians and persons of other faiths, we are able to reach a large cross section of Caribbean people. Finally, making full use of the electronic media (radio, television, internet) continues to pose for us a challenge as well as a marvellous opportunity for education. It is our intention to make use of all these media for educating Caribbean people in the ecological crisis and our response to it.
45. We urge our parishes to undertake practical programmes of action corresponding with our educational efforts. These programmes of action could be undertaken in conjunction with neighbouring parishes, other Christian communities, and communities of other faiths. These programmes of action could take a variety of forms, e.g. clearing polluted sites, creating green spaces on the church compound, campaigning to change lifestyles. A page in the church bulletin could be devoted to ecological matters. Special events (e.g. services and concerts) could be planned, highlighting the need for action. At harvests and fairs the parish could run a stall selling fair trade goods that would highlight the link between ecological crisis and poverty and injustice.

46. The Church's public worship (the sacraments and funeral rite), if conducted properly, is a pre-eminent opportunity for education. This is true especially in Baptism and Eucharist. In our public worship we use elements of creation to praise God and to sanctify humans. We use e.g. the natural elements of water and oil, as well as things manufactured from elements of creation as a result of human ingenuity and creativity, e.g. bread and wine, salt, ashes and candles. By making use of these elements we emphasise the goodness of God's creation and that all reality is potentially, or in fact, the bearers of God's presence and the instruments of God's saving activity. Our use of these elements in our public worship has implications for our caring for creation. "Their very use helps to orchestrate a sense of the universe as praising God, the Creator and Redeemer...the whole of creation is incorporated in these acts of prayer...the prayers articulate how these gifts from God are understood to reflect God's creative and redemptive work on our behalf".⁵⁶ That the things of creation give glory to God by their very being and by fulfilling their purpose is clearly reflected whenever we pray The Song of the Three Young Men (Daniel 3:52-90). We humans give voice to this praise. Tertullian, one of the well known third century Fathers of the Church, in a treatise on prayer Chs 28-29, reflected these sentiments: "The angels too pray, all of them. The whole creation prays. Cattle and wild beasts pray, and bend their knees and in coming forth from their stalls and lairs look up to heaven, their mouth not idle, making the spirit move in their own fashion. Moreover the birds taking flight lift themselves up to heaven and instead of hands spread out the cross of their wings, while saying something which may be supposed to be a prayer".
47. There is a real relationship between our public worship, in which we use natural and manufactured goods, and the call to justice. "We should be attuned to where and how the experience of creation is in fact not what it ought to be...and what created reality is not".⁵⁷ An example of this is the Church's insistence that clean water be used for the washing in Baptism. This insistence should help us to recognise that many people in the world do not have access to potable water and that much of their water is polluted. This acknowledgement should spur us on to want to do

⁵⁶ Kevin W. Irwin, *Sacramentality And Theology of Creation: A Recovered Paradigm For Sacramental Theology*, *Louvain Studies* 23, 1998, pg 163-164.

⁵⁷ *Ibid* pg 171

something about this situation. Similarly as we partake of the Bread and the Wine in the celebration of the Eucharist our complacency should be challenged by the recognition that there is an inequitable distribution of food and drink. For many there is insufficiency, for others there is abundance. This too should lead us to want to do something about this situation. “Actual celebrations (Sacraments) for real people in specific communities are intended to be reminders for them of where God is, (and always will be) as well as confront them about where God’s presence is diminished. The very human ingenuity that enables Liturgy and Sacraments to occur, is the very ingenuity that is needed to ameliorate injustice to persons and the whole created cosmos....injustice in and to the created world needs to be pointed out even as the world as we know it is filled with the grandeur of God”.⁵⁸

Government, Corporations and Civil Society

48. Caribbean peoples face a gigantic task as we work together on the ecological challenges in the region, some of which were outlined in this Letter (cf part II). To face these challenges effectively will require the collaboration of governments, local and multinational corporations and all members of the Church and civil society. We recognise that one of the obstacles to resolving these challenges is the lack of adequate human and financial resources. Globalisation and trade liberalisation are already posing challenges to development in the Caribbean, e.g. ‘reduction of external aid; problems in accessing trade preferential markets; adversely changing debt profiles.’⁵⁹ No one Caribbean state is able to go it alone. In this context regional integration is imperative so that we can more effectively negotiate with international bodies. Integration is particularly urgent as we face the possibility of being a part of the Free Trade Area of The Americas (FTAA). Also, as active members of SIDS we have the opportunity of working with other Small Island Developing States to improve our chances in making a substantial case before international agencies.
49. Obstacles to Caribbean people effectively facing and working through the ecological challenges, mentioned above in # 48, were repeated in Mauritius. Also clear for everyone to see were the

⁵⁸ *ibid* pg 172.

⁵⁹ The SIDS Programme Of Action, ch 2, Caribbean SIDS and The New Global Economic Order.

increased and more frequent disasters related to global warming over the 10-year period. The international community once again promised assistance to SIDS, including the establishment of natural disaster early warning systems and the security upgrading of their systems and facilities. However, in the opinion of Amos Tincani, head of the EC Delegation to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, the Mauritius Strategy did not include specific financial pledges.

50. A top priority for our regional governments is greater efforts at poverty_eradication (cf # 9 above). By this we mean not only welfare but also more importantly empowering people to take control of their own lives. Increase in population, due partly to urbanization, can exasperate the poverty situation and pose real challenges for civil authorities. In conjunction with the social partners and civil society, governments must constantly review their education system to ensure that it is well suited for the 21st century and is available for all. Given the high unemployment rate in many of our countries, every effort must be made to ensure that every person is able to find the type of employment for which he/she is educated and which corresponds with his/her gifts and talents.
51. Our representatives to the United Nations, in collaboration with those of other nations that have already ratified the Kyoto Protocol, must keep alive the need for the United States of America and Australia to ratify that Protocol. We are conscious of the fact that some other nations (e.g. India, China and Brazil) are fast developing their economy making use of fossil fuel for their energy. These too, though not bound by the Kyoto Protocol, need to begin cutting back on the amount of greenhouse gasses they emit. As we saw in #13 above, an international control of the amount of greenhouse gasses will alleviate a major portion of global warming, thus decreasing the disastrous effects on the ecology.
52. We commend our nations for efforts at setting up regional institutes at both the Cave Hill and St. Augustine campuses of the University of the West Indies to monitor the effect of climate change. We applaud the establishment in Barbados of the Caribbean Institute For Meteorology and Hydrology to undertake research in the effects of climate change.

53. Controlling greenhouse gasses is allied with our present energy usage. (#14 above). We urge our governments, corporations and civil society to cooperate in seeking alternative (to oil and gas) sources of energy (renewable energy). Expensive though this might be in its initial stages, greater use needs to be made of solar, wind and bagasse (in sugar producing countries). We encourage our governments to offer incentives for these alternative sources of energy, by removing taxes/duties on the equipment necessary to produce clean energy from these sources.
54. We encourage governments, corporations and civil society to do everything possible to protect and preserve the treasures in the Caribbean Sea. (#16ff) We encourage that a Caribbean Fisheries Agreement along with its necessary machinery be studied carefully to ensure the availability of the Caribbean Sea to all Caribbean fishermen, to discourage over fishing and to regulate trawlers from outside the region. Ways need to be found to protect coral reefs from damaging human activity and to try to rehabilitate those reefs which have been damaged. Our Ministries of Tourism and International Transport must increase their efforts to protect our coastlines from oil spills and the discharge of solid wastes, wastewater and bilge water from commercial ships and cruise liners. We encourage our governments to work with other countries to continue the protest against nuclear shipments through our waters.
55. Care for the land (#22) remains one of the most important elements in environmental conservation. Particular attention has to be paid to the agricultural sector. Farmers are the ones most capable of discovering and developing the hidden potential of the land and thus fulfilling their role of co-creators with God. Encouragement and concrete incentives should be offered to farmers to produce as much food as possible, preferably organically grown, to feed our people. In many of our countries they are hampered by drought, other natural disasters, and by inadequate means of transport and distribution. Our governments must be alert to the danger of Free Trade whereby farmers have lost their livelihood and the land remains fallow in other parts of the world as a result of cheap farming produce being dumped on the market. Great care must be taken in this new global economic order to ensure the protection of our farmers, not only from imports from outside of the region but also from increasing urbanisation and other forms of local development.

56. Care for the land will also involve the strictest monitoring of air and water pollution from toxic wastes resulting from rampant industrialisation.
57. Care for the land will also include the handling of solid and liquid waste. Alternative proposals to existing landfills merit careful consideration, though initially they might be expensive. In the interim recycling can be a great help. We encourage a regional approach to recycling. Every household, commercial enterprise and industry will have to cooperate to make recycling truly effective. We applaud efforts already being made in the region to recycle glass, plastic bottles, cardboard. Paper and metals could be added to this list. In this context the necessary legislation and policing are needed to put an end to illegal and indiscriminate dumping. We must mention here the need for careful and adequate handling and disposal of biomedical and radioactive waste.
58. Some of our Ministries of the Environment have already developed a policy and programme for sustainable development that emphasise the need for preserving forests, (#23) undertaking re-forestation, the planting of trees in urban areas and requiring new developments to make room for preserving and planting trees and other plants. We appreciate these efforts. Over and above this, as populations increase, especially in our cities and urban areas, it becomes even more necessary to create natural parks and other protected areas to offer refreshment for our people and to conserve our wildlife and our ecosystem – our natural heritage and patrimony.
59. Finally, we turn our attention to the urgency of securing our fresh water supply (#27 ff). It is imperative that water use be controlled. The full cooperation of every resident is urgent for the conservation of water. It is urgent too, that everyone realise that water is life, that water is God's gift to everyone and to other living beings as well, and therefore think of ways in which water can be conserved. In many of our territories, millions of gallons of water and other liquid waste end up in the sea. Proposals made to our governments to collect this water, treat it and make it available for non-potable uses seem worthy of serious consideration. Hotels and other large institutions in the region could create rain-harvesting projects for use in commercial facilities. How much of our rainwater rushes off into the sea! The building of water tanks and catchments in each home, business and industry for non-potable purposes is another way of harvesting rain water.

Residents And Long Term Visitors:

60. The future of our planet, i.e. the well being of persons and other creatures, is in our hands, in each of our hands. We appeal to you to be open to seeing the relationship between God, human beings and other creatures as outlined in part III of our Letter. Our own personal involvement is vital. Also vital is our own conversion towards a different lifestyle, a different way of thinking and behaving. We all need to be free of “a way of life that values consumption, convenience, wealth, status and economic growth above all else”.⁶⁰ It is not wrong to want to live better. What is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards ‘having’ than ‘being’ and which wants to ‘have more’ not in order to ‘be more’ but in order to live in enjoyment as an end in itself.⁶¹
61. We make our own the sentiments of the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales: “All religious traditions encourage simplicity of life, often even a certain austerity. In the Christian tradition, this wisdom derives from the Lord’s own profound saying, ‘where your treasure is, there will your heart be too’ (Matt. 6:21). The desire for affluence, for more and more possessions, for almost anything new, can begin to dominate us. In a consumerist age, the pressure exerted on us by the advertising industry and by the visibility of luxury goods all around us encourages the assumption that it is our right to use the gifts of creation entirely as we wish. It will require continuing reflection about how our habits of life can all too easily become excessive and wasteful, and how they affect the well being of others, to counter these pressures. Nevertheless to do so is a way of cooperating with Christ’s mission to bring reconciliation and peace and indeed can truly be a way of learning afresh to love God and our neighbour”.⁶²

V CONCLUSION

62. In #s 32-42 we shared with you Catholic thinking on some aspects of God and His creation. At the same time we raised a number of complex issues, specifically on the true worth of non-human nature

⁶⁰ The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, *The Call Of Creation: God’s Invitation And The Human Response: The Natural Environment And Catholic Social Teaching*, August 2002, #V.

⁶¹ cf Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 30th December, 1987, #37.

⁶² The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, *The Call of Creation*, #V.

of which there are a variety of opinions. We wish to be a part of a Caribbean and international conversation on what may very well be a central issue for this century. There is still a lot that we do not know about our planet. And so we make an urgent appeal to scientists in the Caribbean to cooperate with other scientists throughout the world in exploring with wisdom and love our planet with all of its potential. We request our scientists to clarify for us the comments by James Lovelock that the process of producing renewable energy from sun, wind and waves will take too long a time sufficiently to counter global warming. Instead he calls for a massive expansion in nuclear generation to ward off the worst effects of climate change.⁶³ We encourage Caribbean theologians and ethicists to accompany scientific research in order to help all of us to understand more clearly the nature of creation and the true worth of every creature. We find challenging the reflection of Thomas Berry when he says: “the ecological community is not subordinate to the human community. Nor is the ecological imperative derivative from human ethics. Rather, our human ethics are derivative from the ecological imperative. The basic ethical norm is the well being of the comprehensive community and the attainment of human well being within that community”.⁶⁴ As Bishops of the AEC we look forward to dialogue with our Caribbean and other theologians, ethicists and ecologists so that all of us will be better able to understand and implement God’s plan for his creation.

63. In # 34 above we spoke of the dynamic and intimate link that exists between human beings and every other creature and the earth itself. Human beings must be seen together with every creature as integral parts of creation. We emphasize here that there is no separation or gulf between us humans and the earth itself. We make our own the quote from Thomas Berry: “Earth and its human community will go into the future as One Sacred Community or neither will survive in any acceptable mode of fulfilment”.⁶⁵ What happens to Earth happens to us humans. The two are not separate but are one. When we speak of Earth we speak of ourselves.

⁶³ cf The Independent, May 24, 2004, with commentary in The Barbados Advocate, June 3, 2004

⁶⁴ T. Berry, “The Great Work: Our Way Into The Future”, 1999, Ch. 9, Ethics And Ecology, Pg 105.

⁶⁵ Talk to Union of Superiors General of Women’s Religious Orders, Rome, January 1993

64. In 1979 Pope John Paul II proclaimed St. Francis of Assisi as the heavenly Patron of those who promote ecology. “St. Francis of Assisi offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation. As a friend of the poor who was loved by God’s creatures, St. Francis invited all of creation i.e. animals, plants, natural forces, even Brother Sun and Sister Moon, to give honour and praise to the Lord. The poor man of Assisi gives us striking witness that when we are at peace with God we are better able to devote ourselves to building up that peace with all creation which is inseparable from peace among all peoples”.⁶⁶ St. Francis interceded for all who groaned – the poor, displaced, refugees, hungry, homeless, fish, birds, animals, polluted rivers and seas, polluted air, land perishing because of drought, and he continues to intercede for them.
65. As the Catholic Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference we place all Caribbean people under the patronage of St. Francis of Assisi.

Signed:

Most Rev. Lawrence Burke, S.J., Kingston-in-Jamaica, President
 Most Rev. Robert Kurtz, C.R., Hamilton-in-Bermuda, Vice-President
 Most Rev. Bishop Malcolm Galt, C.S.Sp., Bridgetown, Treasurer
 Most Rev. Archbishop Kelvin Felix, Castries
 Most Rev. Archbishop Edward Gilbert, C.Ss.R., Port of Spain
 Most Rev. Archbishop Michel Méranville, St Pierre/Fort de France
 Most Rev. Archbishop Patrick Pinder, Nassau
 Most Rev. Bishop Francis Alleyne, O.S.B., Georgetown
 Most Rev. Bishop Gordon Bennett, S.J., Mandeville
 Most Rev. Bishop Ernest Cabo, Basseterre/Pointe-à-Pitre
 Most Rev. Bishop Vincent Darius, St George’s-in-Grenada
 Most Rev. Bishop Wilhelmus de Bekker, Paramaribo
 Most Rev. Bishop Charles Dufour, Montego Bay
 Most Rev. Bishop Emmanuel Lafont, Cayenne
 Most Rev. Bishop Gabriel Malzaire, Roseau
 Most Rev. Bishop Donald Reece, St John’s/Basseterre
 Most Rev. Bishop Robert Rivas, O.P., Kingstown
 Most Rev. Bishop Luis Secco, Willemstad
 Most Rev. Bishop Anthony Dickson, Bishop Emeritus, Bridgetown

April 2005

⁶⁶ Pope John Paul II, World Day Of Peace, January 1st, 1990.

Appendix

The Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference would be happy to receive your reflections on this Pastoral Letter.

Reflections may be sent to:

AEC Secretariat
9a Gray Street
Port of Spain
Trinidad and Tobago, W.I.
E.mail: aec@carib-link.net
Fax: (868) 628-3688