

Comments by Fr. Seán McDonagh on the Document

Archbishop Dermot Clifford, Professor John Sweeney, Martin Long, Ms Assumpta Kerins and pupils of St. Francis of Assisi Primary School.

Last week on November 3rd 2009, the Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon, addressed 200 religious leaders at a Celebration of Faiths and the Environment at Windsor Castle. He implored religious leaders to make their voice heard in the run up to the UN Framework Conference on Climate Change at Copenhagen in December. He told them “you can inspire, you can provide, you can challenge your political leaders through your wisdom and through your followers.”

The pastoral reflection, *The Cry of the Earth* is an initiative by the Irish Bishops to respond to the challenge of climate change by drawing on the wisdom of contemporary science. In preparing this document the bishops looked to experts in the field of climate science such as Professor John Sweeney and his colleagues who are members of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. They have enumerated the causes and consequences of climate change. As a missionary I have seen these consequences in countries where Columban missionaries work such as the Philippines, Peru and Pakistan.

Because the bishops are pastors, *The Cry of the Earth* goes beyond the science of climate change and points to the moral and religious implications of climate change. It does this by drawing on our faith traditions which is rooted in the Bible and the witness of the Church down through the ages. The text marries science, theology, prayer and action. One moral principle which is especially relevant for you – the students – is the call to intergenerational justice. This simply means that

the world which my generation passes on to you must be as beautiful and fruitful as the one we received from our parents.

Your school is named after St. Francis of Assisi. He is the Patron of Ecology because he responded with joy, thanksgiving and praise to God for the gift of creation. He also expanded the concept of 'neighbour' to include not only the human race, but the whole of creation and all its creatures. The text also reminds us that our Celtic saints such as Columba, Bridget and Columban also showed a special love for God's creation. The Pastoral Reflection calls for an 'ecological conversion' from everyone, especially in the way we use fossil fuel. This is a timely challenge, one month before the Copenhagen Conference.