



MARS

Marist Asylum-seeker
Refugee Service

'Gifts for future generations'

Christmas 2015

Dear Marist Colleague

A few weeks ago while saying mass at St Patrick's Church Hill a young woman with a small baby no bigger than the two loving hands that held him, approached to receive communion.

As I blessed the child I asked his name- I think the mother said "Alphonse".

Gifts... cared for, preserved and shared

At the end of mass I suggested that the best Christmas gift we could offer Alphonse and all our children and future generations is a planet where the gifts of creation are cared for, preserved and shared by all who inhabit the world. Is it possible?

Maybe we Marists can do our small part in addressing this question.

And maybe Alphonse and his generation may look back in

middle age and thank their grandparents for taking action to save the planet.

Not far from our shores

In the New Year let's be in touch to consider one issue not far from our shores: the people of the Carterets Islands, atolls of Bougainville.

'Laudato Si'

Pope Francis in his widely read and acclaimed Encyclical *Laudato Si* writes "this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and unprecedented destruction of eco-systems.

"Indeed, because of its failure to abandon fossil fuels the post-industrial world may well be remembered as the most irresponsible in human history

"The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophe.

Timely Christmas warnings

"It is timely to be reminded of these warnings at Christmas, for two reasons.

"**First**, this has become a season which, more than any other time of the year, invites the kind of excessive material consumption that so typifies the disproportionate call on the Earth's resources by affluent Western lifestyles.

It has been calculated, for instance, that with existing

technologies it would require four more planets with resources similar to our own for everyone in the world to enjoy the levels of consumption of the average American or Australian.

"**Second**, it is easy to forget that an essential part of the Christian message - and hence the message of Christmas - is a call to protect and nurture the natural environment as part of what it means to promote the Kingdom of God on Earth." (A quote from a 2006 editorial)

May our future generations inherit the earth with all its beauty, gifts and possibilities; and may our celebrations at this time be of thanksgiving and gratitude for what we have received and of sharing with those who are desperate for safety, shelter, sustenance and peace.

Jim

PS: As I write this Gaudete (joyful) Sunday has just passed and news has come from Paris:

"Representatives of 195 countries on Saturday evening approved a landmark climate accord that, for the first time, commits nearly every country to lowering planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions to help stave off the most drastic effects of climate change."

PPS:

In a typical acerbic article in the

SMH this week, the retired political journalist, Alan Ramsay, once again took up his quill, dipped it in acidic ink and retrospectively highlighted the fall from grace of our recent PMs eliciting a tad of unbidden *schadenfreude*.

At the conclusion of the article he adds

“As for the year ending, I think the little man with the modest flat outside Vatican City who drives himself in his undistinguished car surely has to be Person/Man/Statesman/Whatever of the Year.

“Everything about Pope Francis from Brazil argues we have not seen or heard his like before, certainly not as head of the most populous, richest, inherently most powerful, often in the past most appalling, Christian Church in the God business.

“I am neither Catholic nor religious of any kind. Yet nobody who has read what Francis has been saying this year, about climate change and personal rights in particular, can credibly deny he is someone who speaks of, and for, and in the interests of, all the earth’s people with a simplicity of language and a force that is hugely moving.

“Up There Francis!”

I agree with Alan: Go Pope Francis!