

# Pastoral Letter

From the Bishop of Killala



## Climate Change

Lent 2020

*"When we come to realise that a healthy relationship with creation is one dimension of our overall personal conversion, which entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures and leads to heartfelt repentance and a desire for change."*

(POPE FRANCIS. LAUDATO SI)

Take a break from electronic entertainment – TV, mobile phone, social media, the Internet and try to become comfortable with stillness and silence. Allow space for God to speak to you.





Ash Wednesday begins a forty day journey for the Christian. Traditionally this is a time for prayer, fasting and almsgiving. It is a time when the Church invites us to step back and consider our lives in the light of our journey of discovering God.

Standing back and looking into our lives cannot just be a moment of reflection, which we then lay aside and abandon. This season of Lent must challenge us in every aspect of our ordinary, everyday lives, a challenge which must lead to repentance if it is to lead to renewal. Allow me to take one topical and important aspect of our lives today and reflect on it in the light of the Gospel.

Climate change challenges our world in a way that is profound and personal. It is profound, in the sense that most people today, with a few notable exceptions, take climate change seriously. International meetings examine it and try to plan for the future in its regard. Unfortunately, one important element in this analysis often seems to be absent; the relationship of creation with its Creator.

Our faith as Christians has an important role to play in the analysis of climate change today. For us, the damage done to creation is not only done to the planet and to the future; it is also done to the God who created us and our planet, our common home, as Pope Francis describes the earth. The Pope emphasises our Christian view of climate change. He says that true ecological conversion happens when “the effects of our encounter with Jesus Christ becomes evident in our relationship with the world around us.” When “we come to realise that a healthy relationship with creation is one dimension of our overall personal conversion, which entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures and leads to heartfelt repentance and a desire for change.” (Pope Francis. *Laudato Si.*)



## Fasting in 2020.

In our Irish tradition, fasting has always been associated with Lent. Black tea, fish on Wednesday and Fridays, stale bread; all of these were aspects of the lives of our ancestors who lived in an age which did not contribute as much to climate change as we do today. As a modern Christian, therefore, we must ask the question; how can I as a Christian in 2020 fast in a manner which will contribute to respecting God's creation, atone for the sins committed against it at present and repair the damage caused?

Allow me to suggest some ways in which our personal relationship with God, our Creator, and the earth, our common home, can be restored during these forty days.

Commit to buying food from local farmers, local food producers or, perhaps, grow your own when possible; by doing so you will help your neighbour and reduce pollution.

Consider ways in which you can respect and conserve the precious resource of water in your daily life.

Buy only what you know you will really use and give the money saved to the poor in our community. It is estimated that one third of food produced is wasted and 10% of greenhouse gas emissions come from food that is thrown out.

Examine your use of fossil fuels and look at ways to reduce this; by walking, biking, carpooling and the use of public transport.

Take a break from electronic entertainment – TV, mobile phone, social media, the Internet and try to become comfortable with stillness and silence. Allow space for God to speak to you.

These are a few suggestions for Lent 2020; ensuring that a healthy relationship with God and with our planet can be an aspect of our repentance for the sins we commit against God and the earth, our common home.

**Bishop John Fleming.**

Ash Wednesday 2020.