

Notes from Care of Our Common Home Feb. 14, 2016

## Outline of Main Topics That Emerged in the Groups

- About Pope Francis and the Encyclical
- Our responsibility to others
- Concerns of Young People
- Education is important.
- What I can do on my own to feel that I am making a contribution.
- Is individual action enough?
- Local Action, Volunteerism is important.
- Public Policy: State, National and International Efforts
- Political problems
- On Faith and Religions, impact on environment
- Factors that affect the damage of the earth
- Current environmental problems
- On Population and Sustainable Earth
- Agricultural Practices, Sustainability and Food
- On How to Conduct the Dialogue in Our Lives
- Our feelings about the state of the earth and our actions

Notes below are (mostly) direct quotes from the group discussions.

\* indicates resource to be put in a resource list.

### About Pope Francis and the Encyclical

It took a Pope to voice this. "Great Man" theory of history.

Pope Francis: environment interwoven with social justice. Poor are affected the most. Need to influence the big picture. The Pope points out that the poor are disproportionately affected by environmental crisis.

Pope Francis is a "stand up" guy.

The environment should be one of the great topics of our time.

How will the catholic church react to Pope Francis treatise. He identifies with poor so PF is trying to help them, the disadvantaged..

Pope Francis is concerned about caring for God's earth but also aware of scientific facts. Pope Francis is bringing the matter of climate change to broader audience

Read the encyclical. The pope is right about greed. Wrong about overpopulation.

The pope's issues are not black and white. There are tradeoffs.

### Our responsibility to others:

broader than issue of environment: poverty and human rights; the environment offers opportunity to help others to alleviate poverty and violation of human rights. "Dominion" over the earth actually meant stewardship. "Dominion" is actually "responsibility"

a healthy environment works against poverty so the two are linked as Pope Francis says . The Flint, MI water crisis is an example. Affordability of healthy food for everyone is another. Nature and spirituality are also linked together as he said in the Encyclical.

### Concerns of Young People

Younger generation is disillusioned by my generation

Children are concerned about their future. At college studying env. Science and business consumerism with environ being foremost. My 18 year old gets it.

Youth are indifferent. Sorry people feel hopeless, especially young. Older are counting on youth.

**Education is important.**

Hopeful for our youth to understand and perhaps educate their parents. Work within standards of learning with schools. High school generation now do not go outside.

Pragmatic approach: education. Try to open kids to experience of BEING in nature and making their own observations. People don't understand the problems. Educate others to change hearts and minds.

**What I can do on my own** to feel that I am making a contribution.

We all have talents which are needed to find solutions, not point fingers.

Downsize our homes and cut energy use. We make choices. Be a responsible purchaser.

Bird watching is an activity that brings you close to nature and concerned about habitat, e.g. rain forests.

Are we being seduced by substituting things like LED bulbs, instead of changing lifestyle?

How much do I have to sacrifice to make this work? Do I have to give up air travel to visit my kids? That is why this conversation is so important. We need more voices at the table.

\*Wendell Berry. Says you're leading a better life when you use less resources.

Being a vegetarian isn't so bad!

Recycle? You can make plastics out of vegetables. Winchester TREX.

Some people are giving more experiences than material objects as gifts.

An individual can operate at Three levels of what to do:

- In our own back yard, planting natives, supporting ecosystems, supporting pollinators, birds, wildlife, diversity, observe interactions.
- Regional. Joining with others & orgs to protect ecosystems and educate landowners.
- International. Choose an issue, learn about it, spread the word, be part of worldwide orgs.

Look at your investment portfolio. What companies are you supporting?

“What can I do?” e.g. recycle. But people are not making money on recycling now, so it is not effective.

Recycle, buy local, argue with neighbors not to have perfect lawn with pesticides.

Reduced my energy footprint by installing solar energy system.

don't talk about how you love the planet, show it.

Concerned about the amount of driving that is necessary living in the country. Can't afford a high mileage car.

TURN OFF Air Conditioning FOR AWHILE

\*Green Faith website. Advice what to do: go meatless 2x per week; drop thermostat by 2 degrees; walk or bicycle; use clothesline; change bulbs to LED

### Is individual action enough?

Need to work with others rather than just making individual choices. Go from being individual victims to being collective survivors. What we do to deal with climate change can help people in poverty. We can now build upon the Pope's platform...alternative energy sources.

Raise public awareness -- letters, legislature, news

with the drop in oil prices, it's now cheaper for companies to make new plastic bags, containers, pill containers, etc., than it is to recycle. A lady from St. James mentioned that the parish had cloth shopping bags made and sold them. Folks take selfies in the store to show that they are using the cloth bags and not plastic ones. The fact that plastic can also be made out of vegetable matter (which

makes it biodegradable) was also raised. This led back to a discussion of how "us" as individuals can make an impact when it seems like there are so many big corporations controlling things. One person in the group kept raising the issue that it's just too big for us to do anything, but the rest of the group still wanted to think of things we could each do to become involved.

We make compromises. Raised on a farm now in my 80s know about land preservation but as artist I use coal as a fuel in my artistic work.

**Local Action, Volunteerism is important.**

Stewardship. What can we do in our communities, e.g. food pantry, habitat for local animals. Do it locally and if everyone does, whole communities will be healthy.

Just one little person, but can join with others, e.g. rappflow, PEC, to monitor and maintain the rivers and land.

Beautiful county. Please preserve it. Consider models of development such as in Europe where population centers are surrounded by farmland.

Instill pride in nature. Littering on country roads. Adopt a highway.

"its all local". Support local organizations like rappflow. Pick one project at a time. manage it.

Planting seed; business; education; get chickens.

Business: starting to invest in sustainable. You can find out what they are doing. Consider boycott of bad companies.

What can we do locally? Earth day..

Ask the Rappahannock news to write obituaries on species extinction

Ministers of churches can do services to memorialize extinctions

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Boycotting or encouraging local business. Reward who does things right.

Humans are smart; we have ability to change things. Need to encourage preservation of places like Rappahannock.

Real estate agents need letter ABOUT DARK SKIES

waste and finding ways to eliminate it can be addressed here and now through projects like the local Food Pantry and recycling efforts here in Rappahannock.

### Public Policy: State, National and International Efforts

Changes in behavior can change your beliefs. People may not like mandates handed down by governments, but if you do it, you can see the benefits.

SNP is wonderful but people lost their homes

Albemarle county...loss of countryside. Would hate to see rappahannock go their direction.

It comes down to people. Pope talks about "technology" as abstract. Said until we feel pain we wont act. What is chance of enlightening 7 billion. But if we could enlighten lawmakers, could have an impact.

Need international solutions to reduce pollution, e.g. carbon tax

A member of our group who attended the climate change talks in Paris reported the United States is the only place in the world where climate change is a controversial issue and we are out of step about this with the rest of the world.

We need to address political issues here in Virginia that, due to legislation, keep solar installations from being as profitable as they are in surrounding states.

China, india are waiting to see US action before...

Compare yourself to the other billions of people on the planet, not to your next door neighbor. E.g. in terms of size of house

Opportunity to help has been present for long time. world is interdependent web need to coordinate efforts inter country wide on a world view

Problem = global polluters, corporations, need to take this on

Several folks spoke of wanting solar panels on their houses, but finding that in Virginia they have been too expensive to ever reach break-even. The group leader, however, noted that in Maryland, where they have a house also, solar panels are encouraged and have a good break-even. The comment was made, "What does Dominion Power do to control Virginia?"

the state of Maine sold LED bulbs for \$2 each so that people would convert to them and save the state the cost of having to build a new power plant. Why not in Virginia? Maine has subsidy on LED bulbs. Thinking ahead to impact on need for expansion of energy plants.

Support policy ideas in Congress; Need to support the Paris agreement.

We could be producing more solar energy in Rappahannock. Maryland has subsidies that make it more feasible. Is any progress possible on public policy in Virginia?

### Political problems

Americans think resources are endless – water, oil, clean air, food. Need to learn how to create more sustainable lifestyles.

Do we need new political parties?

Need new people to run for office but Gerrymandering prevents.

Politics. Climate change is not important to Americans. Candidates want dominion over us. Who will be responsible and practice good stewardship?

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Our political leadership is not taking climate change seriously.

Let's write our representatives

### On Faith and Religions, impact on environment

Worlds of faith and rationality complement each other.

Belief in interfaith dialogue

Belief and science are compatible/complementary. Science reinforces beliefs.

“The world was made for us, and we were made for the world to reach eternal life. “ This is not new in religious traditions.

About dominion on earth from genesis: should be seen as “stewardship”. Need to change relation to earth and other people.

Dominion of the earth. Phrase from Genesis. Has been used to justify abusing the earth. But take a step back. We humans are part of the process of creation/evolution, not superior to it. Substitute responsibility for dominion. We can make a difference. Ownership of the earth idea has done more harm than good.

Indigenous people understand relationship of man as part of nature..

\*Green Faith website has a pledge: "Make your life a blessing to the planet."

Stewardship is most important concept.

God gave us intellect to decide what God intended us to do and be.

\*Patriarch Bartholomew is very green.

Should be good stewards of land owned, live under law of a Christian. Follow god's guidance. Will debate if necessary.

We are all creatures. We have been created.

If we are in charge, then we are responsible.

"Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."  
(Unitarian universalist)

### Factors that affect the damage of the earth

Greed for natural resources.

Damage is not only caused by only some peoples' use of the planet;, all of us use too much. What we all do is using more than we produce.

Water – right to water vs buying water.

We are in bad shape but we might be surprised by what nature can do.

Maybe that world will go on but will *people* be here and thriving?

Consumerism, throwaway society

we are interrupting that process of Coevolution of plants & animals over time –

\*We are in the midst of our 6<sup>th</sup> major species extinction..

Do large corporations pay attention to climate change? Mars is concerned but as their profits are affected.

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## Current environmental problems

Haiti is devastated by climate change.

Tremendous environmental damage in E. Europe and Russia. But radical groups can be equally damaging.

Newport news VA is trying to change/address rising water.

The changing climate is a problem to focus on rather than who/what

Since 05 fracking in Oklahoma, earthquakes are way up in OK. But official story is there is no connection.

Ten years ago, too bad trees on lot were cut down for firewood. Bad land management. Lack of foresight in land management. Unintended consequences.

Cured itself, nature. 10 years ago, in Cuba, 4 lane highway with ox carts. Things change.

Oil is cheap now. Things can change fast.

What happens if we lose the grid?

\*Earth 2100. Get it from amazon. There is controversy about who what causes but need to focus on what to do. Will or won't catastrophes lead to high priority to deal with climate change?

Climate change needs to transcend partisanship.

Do we have to promote species extinction? No.

## On Population and Sustainable Earth

Population and sustainable resources must be compatible however we work that out in our personal lives including educating women and supporting equal rights as opposed to a patriarchy.

We need to rid ourselves of addiction to a perpetual growth model for our economy.

Critical of the encyclical: most important is overpopulation. Absence of this issue is a weakness of the encyclical. Answer = (?) will solve the problem. 0 action, movement, by large groups.

Past tipping point towards doom. Pop control: 11 million by 2050

### Agricultural practices, sustainability and Food

Poisoning of the planet with chemicals in agriculture due to Monsanto gmo crops. Spraying of herbicides that destroy weeds the pollinators need.

In giving scholarships for high school graduates, can we make it a condition that they not work for Monsanto?

One thing you can do is only buy organic food.

But another argues that organic does not make a product good. Grass fed animals are better than organic fed.

Try to think beyond Rappahannock. Think Mexico. Poor people. Do we support poor countries by Monsanto provided corn?

Poor countries are duped by U.S.

One person says that we need to use all these genetically modified seeds so we can grow food for poor folks in other countries. Farmers in the group say that the poor were quite fine growing food for themselves in many countries that now exist only on U.S. exports.

Chickens are being sent to China to be processed then sent back to U.S.

In poor neighborhoods in the U.S. sometimes they only have McDonald's as a food source.

How do you convince Monsanto to do it without destroying the planet/

Poor go to farmers market at end of day to get the cheaper defective produce left over.

People in U.S. eat too much meat, processed food, too much sugar.

Chinese corporate pigs are not treated humanely.

Is USDA intractable? Its doing better. But fields being converted to corn through public policy. Corn ethanol mandate is public policy and pernicious.

(1) we eat too much beef and meat in general (suggested: 2 vegetarian days a week); (2) we eat too much sugar and high fructose corn syrup; and (3) growing and buying local food is better than trusting processed food, except it was noted that poor people don't have as much access to either option.

Farmer's comment: much of what he was taught in school (he has a master's degree) about farming when he was young has been replaced for the good. he used to separate his sheep, cows, and chickens. That, however, meant that he had to worm each animal quarterly or risk having them die. Now he knows that if you let the cows, sheep, and chickens use the same large field you don't have to worm them at all. Seems the cow worm eggs get eaten by the sheep for whom the worm egg is just food (sheep don't get cow worms). He said that that is only one of many examples of changes in farming practices that are more natural and require no chemicals, special feeds, penning animals, etc. However, a lot of folks, esp. big commercial farms still use the old practices.

in the county there are now companies coming in who are looking to rent untilled land and farm it. The benefit to the land owner is that they get a tax break for farming. Once the owner agrees, the company goes in and plant corn with genetically modified seeds and chemicals. Mr. Miller said that within 10 years the land is dead.

that Monsanto is not a nice company in making all the genetically engineered seeds which is really hurting farming in the U.S. and, as many noted, in poor countries where farmers have to pay a lot for the genetically modified seeds. That led to a discussion of the possible need to look at the stocks one owns to make sure they are environmentally good companies. One person, however, said that just would be too hard to do since she has mutual funds, each of which holds lots of stocks. (Personal comment: It's very risky not to make the effort to know what stocks your mutual funds hold. Your portfolio may not be as diversified as you think.)

corn as a crop is just bad. There were questions as to why corn is so subsidized by the government; why it seems to be used in sweeteners like high fructose corn syrup (worse than sugar), in ethanol (which is dirtier than gasoline), etc.

About agricultural methods in the U.S. What the ag colleges teach is not always good for the ecosystem. For example, there are many cases where nature is more effective than the methods taught. Example given of having to use pharmaceuticals to worm cattle, sheep. Costs money and hard on the animals. But if you run the cattle and the sheep on the same land, the worms from the different species counteract each other.

Why are these healthier methods not more prevalent?

Cost is a factor. Crowfoot farm raises very healthy, delicious chickens, free roaming in the fields,, fed organic feed. Very expensive. Not achievable on large industrial scale

### On How to Conduct the Dialogue in Our Lives

Listening respectfully to entrenched opinions and looking for points of agreement.

There is Opposition to idea that man is responsible for climate change.

We need collective solutions in a positive way.

Give Praise for positive things we see people doing.

Not satisfied with own efforts to help the planet. Want to learn from others what more/else to do.

Listen to obstructionists in a contemplative way so they don't feel alienated.

Can I engage with people I had not been able to talk with on these subjects?

Why are we here?

- Want to learn how to have this conversation.
- Nature will teach us more.
- Respected friends, acquaintances here to converse with.
- Read the encyclical.
- Seeing nature disappear. Want better ideas.
- Celtic spirituality, vision, unity, humanity, nature.

- Climate change. Find out who else is interested in this community.
- RappFLOW...learning how to keep the water clean.

- It was also discussed that development (a future risk for the county) can be controlled so that preservation of trees and lots of green areas can be required of any developer.

Why participate today?

- Want to help educate congregation in my parish to be responsible.
- Read the encyclical.
- Rappahannock is on the map as an exporter of clean water.
- Native plants, rappflow.
- Own 55 acres. We should talk.
- Alternative energy specialist
- Teaches class in man and environment. Is a critic of the encyclical.
- Interested in eco people

What will I leave kids. Educate people on whats going on. Its good to talk about it.s

Professional writer. Viewpoint is humanist. Duty is to ourselves. Pope Wrote about duty to god.

Neither big leaders nor small solutions will solve problem. Wish I had hope.

Education is key factor. Perhaps Pope did not speak on pop. Because of catholic doctrine. Wanted to be heard.

Want to have hope. Population should not be left to chance.

Too many things, too much. What will priorities be?

Social activism as a tenet of faith. Learn from each other. Have a conversation.

Our feelings about the state of the earth and our actions

Do what you can do even though no hope. Most people want what we have

Comfortably proud that I am doing what I am doing.

Create hope within yourselves

No matter what happens try my best.

Brain can think abstractly. Maybe people are out of place. Nature won't care.

But we care.

Hope. Where there is life there is hope. Doing what you think is right.

Takes a lot to be angry.

These ideas have been falling on Deaf ears since 70's when working on energy/global issues.

Not resolved. Assume resolution will happen.

Voluntary simplicity.

Take it personally.

People will disagree on means not end. Respect points of view.