

'The Wave'

Methodist Central Hall

Saturday, 5 December 2009.

Closing remarks and final blessing

This morning is a marvellous expression of solidarity and compassion – robust Christian virtues! Today we are concerned first of all for those whose lives are affected by climate change, especially the world's poorest and most disadvantaged people. This is an important perspective which we must not lose in the midst of all the other concerns expressed in recent weeks.

We know well that issues of world poverty and human development cannot be separated from concerns for the environment. They are intimately connected. The well-being of the planet cannot be set apart and pursued apart from the well-being of the human person. They must be held together. As Pope Benedict XVI has memorably stated: "The book of nature is one and indivisible."

This is all about how we live each day. That is why religious faith is so important in tackling the problems we face because faith is directly concerned with how we live each day, how we put truth and belief into practice. In that daily living we need to achieve sound and sustainable relationships between peoples and with the environment of the created world.

In his statement to the UN Climate Change Initiative in September this year, Pope Benedict XVI made clear that since the natural environment is given by God to everyone, so our use of it "entails a personal responsibility towards humanity as a whole, particularly towards the poor and towards future generations." This is why we are right to repeat again and again the straightforward appeal: 'Live simply!'; 'Live simply so that others may simply live and so that our planet may be cared for and not exploited!' Of course we sense within us never-ending demands, often provoked by the culture of our consumer society. But we must look hard at the way we live our lives and consider again those whose future is threatened by the effects of our own lifestyles. Only when we are clearly prepared to change the way we live will politicians be able to achieve the change we say we want to see.

Today's readings have helped us to rediscover the moral and scriptural foundations of our concerns. We believe that God created the world and all that it contains. This creation reflects God's goodness. To love God is, among other things, to give thanks and praise for the gifts of creation and to recognise that they are destined for all people. Our development of technology, for example is also one of those gifts, part of the call of God 'to cultivate and take care of the land' (Gen 2.15). So technological advance is a crucial part of the way we will find solutions to

problems caused by climate change. Technology, of course, is not morally neutral. Rather its proper use is guided always by its effect on the common good.

Let the genius of our finest minds serve the needs of all, and the needs of our environment.

Our voices today are not filled with despair and gloom, but with hope. This is because we know the source of true, enduring hope. Our most radical hope lies in the truth of the promised final completion, the final resurrection of all created beings, transformed into the reality of that wonderful vision of 'a new heaven and a new earth.'(Rev 8.19-23)

As Christians we try to live within the promise of this resurrection. It is the work of God. It is not work that we can achieve on our own. It is the work of the Risen Christ, the one through whom all things are made, and in whom all things will come to their completion. Our essential calling is to serve Him, to advance His purpose as best we can, establishing here and there true signs of his Kingdom, and awakening true hope in his unfailing promises. All things will be renewed in him; they will not vanish into oblivion or into a distant heaven. In God's plan, the earth has a far greater destiny than its present state, a far greater fulfilment.

This hope inspires us to insist that our world is not our own, not at our disposal, not for us to do with just what we like. And at the centre of our world stands the human person, every single one made in the image and likeness of God and deserving, for that reason alone, respect, freedom and cooperation.

Hope inspires us; faith sustains us. Our union with Christ in prayer becomes a source of energy, of new life for our effort as his disciples, as his hands and voice. Our commitment to Christ means solidarity with all peoples and respect for this precious planet. Let us go out today ready to express this solidarity and be filled with true and lasting hope.

Blessing:

Let us pray for God's blessing.

May the Lord Jesus Christ be with you as you walk together, seeking peace and justice for all God's people. **All: Amen.**

May he go before you to give you strength and courage, as you live and act in solidarity with people and for the well-being of this planet. **All: Amen.**

May he watch over you and keep you in his care, as you join with others to bring real and lasting change to your lives and to the world. **All: Amen.**

And may almighty God bless you all, the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit. All: Amen.

+Vincent Nichols,

Archbishop of Westminster