



REFLECTION 1: An Introduction

“The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole.”

– *Pope Benedict XVI Caritas in Veritate*

“All people and things are interdependent. The world has become so small that no nation can solve its problems alone, in isolation from others. That is why I believe we must all cultivate a sense of responsibility based on love and compassion for each other.”

– *The Dalai Lama*

Compassionate and loving God,
You created the world for us all to share,
A world of beauty and plenty.
Create in us a desire to live simply,
So that our lives may reflect your generosity.
Creator God,
You gave us the responsibility for the earth,
A world of riches and delight.
Create in us a desire to live sustainably,
So that those who follow after us
May enjoy the fruits of your creation.
God of peace and justice,
You give us the capacity to change,
To bring about a world that mirrors your wisdom.
Create in us a desire to act in solidarity,
So that pillars of injustice crumble
And those now crushed are set free.

– *Linda Jones*

Readings and Articles

Use these suggested readings to introduce groups to *livesimply*.

Use the reflection questions in the next section to guide your discussion.

1. *Livesimply: A spirituality for the 21st century, By Julie Clague*

([Link on CD](#) “Extracts From Livesimply Anthology CAFOD“)

2. What is Global warming?

Carbon dioxide and other gases warm the surface of the planet naturally by trapping solar heat in the atmosphere. This is a good thing because it keeps our planet habitable. However, by burning fossil fuels such as coal, gas and oil and clearing forests we have dramatically increased the amount of carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere and temperatures are rising.

The vast majority of scientists agree that global warming is real, it's already happening and that it is the result of our activities and not a natural occurrence.¹ The evidence is overwhelming and undeniable.

We're already seeing changes. Glaciers are melting, plants and animals are being forced from their habitat, and the number of severe storms and droughts is increasing.

If the warming continues, we can expect catastrophic consequences:

Deaths from global warming will double in just 25 years -- to 300,000 people a year.⁶ Global sea levels could rise by more than 20 feet with the loss of shelf ice in Greenland and Antarctica, devastating coastal areas worldwide.⁷

Heat waves will be more frequent and more intense.

Droughts and wildfires will occur more often.

The Arctic Ocean could be ice free in summer by 2050.⁸

More than a million species worldwide could be driven to extinction by 2050.⁹

There is no doubt we can solve this problem. In fact, we have a moral obligation to do so. Small changes to your daily routine can add up to big differences in helping to stop global warming. The time to come together to solve this problem is now.

Adapted from "What is Global Warming," www.climatecrisis.net/thescience

3. Climate Pollution - How Ireland stacks up

Among rich countries Ireland is the 8th most generous overseas aid donor per person, although aid budgets are presently being slashed. But Ireland is the 5th most climate polluting country per person in the world.

If everybody lived like the Irish we would need the resources of more than three planet Earths to survive. But we have just one Earth. And if it is to be a just one, we will all have to do our fair share to prevent climate chaos.

Ireland is emitting 17 tonnes of greenhouse gases per person per year (2003, 2004, 2005). This makes us the second worst polluter in the European Union per head of population after Luxembourg and compares to an EU average of 11 tonnes.

Taking carbon emissions alone, Ireland emitted over 10 tonnes per person in 2003. Ethiopia, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda, four of Ireland's priority aid countries in Africa, each produced 0.1 tonne per person. So every Irish person is responsible for 100 times the carbon pollution of the average Ethiopian or Ugandan.

Even Brazil, India and China, three of the "emerging economies" of the developing world, produced just 1.6, 1.2 and 3.2 tonnes of CO₂ per person in 2003.

Across the developing world as a whole the average per capita emissions were 2.2 tonnes. In the 49 poorest countries it was just 0.2.

It is these poorest countries, who have done least to cause climate change, who are being hit first and hardest by its impacts and is least able to adapt to those impacts.

Under the 1992 UN Convention on Climate Change rich countries recognised their historical responsibility to act first to curb their pollution.

Under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol Ireland agreed to limit the growth in our emissions to 13% above 1990 levels by 2008-2012. But in 2005 our emissions had already reached 25% above 1990, almost twice the rise we committed to.

Sources: Eurostat and the UNDP Human Development Report 2006

Adapted from www.stopclimatechaos.ie

Reflection Questions

Discuss the following in small groups, or reflect by yourself and share.

After reading the first article, reflect on some of the values in your society.

What, if anything, prevents our modern society from being as “happy?”

What would our society look like if people lived more simply, sustainably, and in solidarity with others?

Climate change is a real threat to the future of the earth, and Ireland has a disturbing environmental track record.

In what ways do our lifestyles affect the other forms of life found on earth? Which, if any, of our behaviours are destructive to the environment and other people? Are we living in a way that preserves our resources as best as possible?

What is our responsibility, if any, to the earth and future generations? What is our responsibility to one another and to the poor?

Activities and Action

Use these suggestions for activities to put your thoughts into action!

Looking at Pictures: Seeds of Inspiration

Watch the PowerPoint presentation located on the resource CD. Looking at photographs guide open-ended exploration and inquiry into the themes of *livesimply*, feel free to pause or go back to certain pictures while watching.

The following questions can be discussed in large or small groups:

What is going on in this picture? How do I think and feel when I look at this image?

What key words or ideas come to mind when I look at this image?

How might the people in the picture respond to the picture? How are you similar to, or different from, these people?

Pick two pictures that you find particularly interesting or that raise issues for you.

Explain your choice to others.

Choose a photo that generates a strong emotion in you. What challenges face the

people and societies in the picture? What challenges does this raise for us in Ireland?