**Reflections by Virginia Bell, Laudato SI Animator, on the updated ‘Call of Creation’ document composed by the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales.**

**Parishes**

I very much welcome the commitment it shows for parishes to study and follow its recommendations, because unless the Encyclical Laudato Si' (LS) and its message is brought to the parishes, it cannot be said to be successful.

This commitment is shown on pages 3, 21 and 24.

On page 3, the bishops say "At the parish, diocesan, and national level, the Church must, and will, play its part". And "..we hope that parishes, schools, universities, families, and individuals will study this document and discuss it".

On page 21, the bishops say "Such education" (i.e. on environmental responsibility) "should take place in schools, families, and seminaries". This recognises that our parish priests have an important part to play in spreading the message.

And on page 24, the bishops repeat "At parish, diocesan, and national level, the Church must play its part".

**Live simply so that others can simply live**

On pages 2, 21 and 22 we find encouragement to live simply and to change habits so as to realign our relationships.

On page 2, the environmental crises are described as "..the result of a broken relationship with God's creation". The beautiful and profound passage from the Encyclical, paragraph 240, is quoted: "The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures".

This theme continues on page 21, where the bishops say that a proper relationship with creation would involve a completely new attitude towards possessions: "In our personal lives, we need a fundamentally new orientation towards the purpose of material possessions". Once free from enslavement to consumption, we are enabled "..to make different choices that will lead to systemic change".

Page 22 reminds us that living simply is a religious tradition, and also that consumerism can become a habit. The more we question our consumeristic tendencies, the easier it will be to break the habit.

**Humancentric**

As with most Catholic commentaries on the environmental crises, an unconscious bias tends to miss out the suffering of the other millions of species on the planet, and to see mainly the situation as it refers to just the one species - humans.

This Document misses several opportunities to bring all creatures into the circle of discussion.

Page 8 gives a good description of the damaged planet, but concludes "The resulting change in the climate threatens the most vulnerable and will severely disrupt the lives of all of humankind". This is true, but the threat and disruption to the millions of other species could also have been mentioned.

On page 10, the loss of species is regretted because it affects humans. In fact, loss of biodiversity affects all life on earth.

Animals could have been included in this sentence on page 12: "Whatever we do, whatever choices we make, other people and the earth itself are affected".

On page 17, the bishops note that "Sin damages our relationships with God and with one another, the relationships between social groups, and that between humanity and the earth". They could have included that it damages our relationship with other creatures also.

And on page 18 we read that the gifts of creation are "destined by God for all people". Surely they are for all beings, not just for all people?

Lastly, page 25 concludes that we need to live "in solidarity with the world's poorest communities". We also need to live in solidarity with all creatures on earth.

**What should we do, and when should we do it?**

Any and every contribution to the discussion on the environmental crises should if possible say what immediate steps we should take to make a significant contribution to tackling the crises. I think it would have been possible and appropriate to do so in this document. Of the four that I think need to be put forward, the bishops have highlighted one - reducing our consumptions and living simply, although that needs to be put more forcefully, as 'buy nothing without challenging the need'. The other three are 'go vegan', 'buy organic' and 'use your vote for the environment'.

**Go vegan.** The University of Oxford research Report published in 'Science' by Poore & Nemecek 1-6-2018 concluded that "A vegan diet is probably the single biggest way to reduce your impact on planet Earth".

**Buy organic.** Soil is destroyed and people are poisoned by pesticides and other chemical sprays. One UN estimation gives us only 6 more decades before we run out of topsoil.

**Use your vote for the environment**. In some countries, people are arrested, imprisoned, even murdered for calling for change. We don't have to suffer as they do; we are able to use our vote. So we should be encouraged to shout out to the politicians that our vote is for the natural environment, and for resources, time and effort to be put into ending fossil fuels and producing green energy.

Perhaps the next update to this document will include these essential actions. If so, I hope it won't be too late by then.