

HEALING A SICK PLANET

The sickness of Planet Earth leads to the sickness of its inhabitants, and especially the poor. The pope says: *'The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, the water, the air, and in all forms of life'* (2). *'The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth'* (21). *'We need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair'* (61).

Global warming brings many casualties, especially to women, the marginal poor and the eco-system. It leads to poverty and forced migration, which are breeding grounds for human trafficking, forced labour, prostitution and even organ trafficking. Hence the Pope says: *'Concern for the environment needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society'* (91).

A mysticism of open eyes leads to a mysticism of helping hands. A healthy mysticism must express itself in resistance to evil. 'No one' says Dorothy Day 'has a right to sit down and feel hopeless about the world: there is too much to do. No one has to do everything, but everyone has to do something'.

We can turn the sordid ravaging of nature into occasions for loving action, compassion and action for justice. And we can pray.

'We can make gestures of loving generosity (58). Hope would have us recognise that there is always a way out (61). We must not think that our efforts are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, though unseen, inevitably tends to spread (212).

Mysticism focuses on the present, not the long-range future. We do not know how human history will close or whether we will succeed in saving the Planet from a major ecological disaster. What we *can* do is to influence the present: we are commissioned to do this and we are changed for the better in the doing.