

Background information

What's 350 all about?!

“350 parts per million (ppm) is the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) that scientists say is the safe upper limit for humanity. We're currently at around 389ppm, and rising at 2ppm per year. This December, world leaders will meet in Copenhagen to decide on a global treaty that will determine how the world responds to the climate change challenge. Many scientists are calling these the most important international negotiations ever...” (www.350.org.nz)

Why the urgency?

“In the Maldives ... every storm surge and major upwelling of the seas represents a major danger to life and property...Climate change is already resulting in an increase in the frequency, intensity and duration of floods, droughts and heat waves...” Dr R K Pachauri, Chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (www.ipcc.ch/pdf/presentations/rkp-statement-unccs-09.pdf)

“... As Arctic sea ice melts, the darker ocean absorbs more sunlight and speeds melting. As tundra melts, methane, a strong greenhouse gas, is released, causing more warming. As species are pressured and exterminated by shifting climate zones, ecosystems can collapse, destroying more species.’ Jim Hansen, leading climate change scientist ([www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/mailings/2009/20090713 Strategies.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/mailings/2009/20090713_Strategies.pdf))

“Our excessive reliance on a fossil fuel-based economy is destroying our planet's resources. It is impoverishing the poor. It is weakening the security of nations. And it is choking global economic potential. ...Many scientists are saying that worst-case projections are already being realized – indeed surpassed. This was the message from the International Scientific Congress, held here in Copenhagen in March.” UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon (www.copenhagenclimatecouncil.com/get-informed/news/opening-address-of-ban-ki-moon-to-the-world-business-summit-on-climate-change.html)

But how can we be sure about climate change?

The research on climate change is probably the largest international scientific research exercise ever. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which completed its fourth report in November 2007 was “the collective effort of almost four thousand of the world's best specialists working tirelessly over five years.” This huge effort was unique because all the governments of the world approved of this report.

(www.ipcc.ch/pdf/presentations/rkp-statement-unccs-09.pdf)

Won't our economy suffer if we try too hard?

Our exports rely on how other countries see us. We need to work with other countries, and be seen to be positive team players. We are going to lose out big time, long term if we are seen as green shams.

We have specialised expertise, and great skills and ideas in this country. We need to harness that very real resource, and use it for our country's and the world's benefit

“Climate change is the defining challenge of our time. I also believe it is the most potent game-changer for business over the next century. It is an opportunity we must seize.” UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

(www.copenhagenclimatecouncil.com/get-informed/news/opening-address-of-ban-ki-moon-to-the-world-business-summit-on-climate-change.html)

What is the current NZ Government position?

The Government has announced ‘an emissions reduction target range of 10-20 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020 to signal New Zealand's commitment.’

(<http://www.climatechange.govt.nz/> retrieved 9 Nov 2009)

This is not enough to prevent the impending disasters. We need a stronger safer target, as well as a commitment to rapidly removing CO₂ and other greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

Further information for parishes and schools on climate change

What do our church leaders say?

In 2002 Pope John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I signed the Venice Declaration, which said: 'A new approach and a new culture are needed, based on the centrality of the human person within creation and inspired by environmentally ethical behaviour stemming from our triple relationship to God, to self and to creation.'

Many bishops' conferences have spoken out on the harm of climate change. In September 2006, New Zealand's Catholics were urged to adopt simpler lifestyles by the country's bishops who said climate change is 'one of the most urgent threats' already facing Pacific peoples.

Pope Benedict is now calling upon all governments to look beyond their own interests: '...the protection of the environment, of resources and of the climate obliges all international leaders to act jointly and to show a readiness to work in good faith, respecting the law and promoting solidarity with the weakest regions of the planet.' – *Caritas in Veritate*, June 2009.

What can I do?

- Sign this petition. Pass it around, promote it personally.
- Learn more. Caritas' website (www.caritas.org.nz) has much more information on the Church's teaching, about the justice issues and the work already being done. Look under 'Advocacy and Campaigns' and 'Environmental justice'. The Catholic magazine *Tui Motu* also has good information in its November issue.
- Support Caritas' Grow Climate Justice campaign on: www.caritas.org/activities/climate_change/Campaign.html
- Go to www.350.org to find out how else you can become involved.
- Write to the Minister for the Environment, Nick Smith, to the Prime Minister, John Key, to the Finance Minister Bill English, and to your local MP, explaining why New Zealand needs to show **much** more commitment to averting global disaster.
- Work and play in ways that help our planet - use public transport, plant more trees!
- Get involved with your local community, making positive local changes.
- Pray. With others. Alone. Continually.

Remember

Christ has no body now on earth but yours
no hand but yours, no feet but yours;
yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion looks out on the world,
yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good
and yours are the hands with which he is to bless us now

Teresa of Avila