

Hearing the Cry of the Earth

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Photo: Claire McEvoy/Trócaire



Jedida Ngithi (28) holding a tomato plant on her sprinkler irrigated farm in Ishiara, Kenya. Trócaire helps farmers in the developing world to overcome the effects of climate change.



Photo: Alan Whelan/Trócaire

Students from St Dominic's in Ballyfermot, Bronagh O'Reilly, Niamh Menton, Danielle McGouran, Chloe Ennis, Lorna Bird meet Derek Keating TD (FG) and ask for a strong climate law.

Stewardship is a fundamental principle of our Lord's teaching. The Bible tells us, 'the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it' (Psalm 24).

The principle of stewardship is not an abstract notion. Our role in life is to manage the resources the Lord has given to us and ensure that these resources are passed on to the next generation. This should be the manner through which Christians throughout the world live their daily lives. It is the principle which allows us judge our daily actions in relation to God's wishes.

When we think about the principle of stewardship, we are forced to consider whether we are managing God's earth in a way that ensures that his resources will be passed to the next generation for them to enjoy and treasure as God wants. We must ask ourselves a fundamental question: are we taking care of God's planet?

Today, the world stands at a significant juncture. Our climate is changing. Rains are disappearing, storms are increasing, temperatures are rising.

The effects of these changes are already very real. Millions of farmers all over the world are struggling to feed their families in the face of rising temperatures and increased drought. Millions more are at risk of floods, storms and other weather events that are increasing in frequency and ferocity.

In the countries in which Trócaire works, we are working with communities who struggle every day to overcome the ever-worsening impacts of climate change. Rainy seasons do not materialise, or are too short and too erratic for seeds to grow into food. People go hungry; children do not go to school. Already over-crowded cities are often the last refuge of hope for people who can no longer grow food on their land. What awaits them in these cities is a life of poverty and hopelessness.

Climate change is undoing efforts to reduce global hunger. Today, approximately 870 million people in the world are hungry, and as rivers dry and green fields turn brown, reducing that figure represents an enormous challenge.

The impacts of climate change are also being felt closer to home. Storms and flooding in Ireland last winter cost over €100m to repair. People

lost their livelihoods, homes were damaged, infrastructure was destroyed. In a sobering assessment, several Government Ministers warned that this was the new reality of life in Ireland due to climate change.

Pope Francis has spoken strongly in defence of the environment, reminding Catholics the world over of their duty to safeguard the future of the planet. In his inaugural speech, Pope Francis said, 'I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: Let us be protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.'

He called upon the spirit of stewardship when he said, 'In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God's gifts.'

We must challenge ourselves to uphold the principle of stewardship that is such a fundamental teaching of our Church. We must seek to live sustainably and without damage to our environment. This will require legislation at national level to reduce carbon emissions and also lifestyle choices at a personal level.

Our daily lives should be judged by our treatment of God's earth and our dedication to preserve, maintain and cherish what God has given to us.

