



## THE YOUNG GUARDIANS OF CREATION IN THE WORLD YOUTH DAY

### “TOWARDS A FUTURE ON HUMAN SCALE”

Since the dawn of civilization, humankind, striving to take advantage of the gifts of nature, has altered the environment. However, it was the Industrial Revolution toward the end of the XVIII century that opened a new era, in which the burning of fossil fuels to generate energy has substantially changed the chemical composition of the Earth's atmosphere.

The scientific community has repeatedly stressed that the data gathered from different sources point to alarming implications for the Earth's climate unless corrective actions are undertaken. The plea of the scientific community can no longer remain unheeded.

#### **The data**

The emission of greenhouse gases into the Earth's atmosphere causes an increase in the planet's surface temperature, a conclusion rooted in sound physical principles. In Earth's past history there were episodes of higher-than-average temperatures. In fact, twice did Earth experience an increase of 4-5<sup>0</sup>C, in one case it took millions of years to occur, in the other, 20 thousand years. It is projected that humankind can cause the same temperature increase in 100 years or so, two hundred times faster than the last natural occurrence. In addition, never in the last 3 million years has the Earth's atmosphere been loaded with so much CO<sub>2</sub> as recently measured.

Melting of glaciers, sea level rise, increasing ocean acidification, deforestation, droughts and extreme weather events put at risk vast swaths of the earth, especially the poorest areas that lack the necessary financial and technical resources to cope with possibly devastating events. It is all the more worrisome if one considers that about 600 million people live in areas of no more than a meter above sea level. The root cause of these phenomena is the increasing demand for energy by the emerging economies around the world.

The right to growth of more than two thirds of the world population striving to emerge from poverty must be fulfilled with the help of technologies that provide clean energies and clean water. At the dawn of the third millennium, advances in science and technology hold the promise to secure the right to growth.

#### **An ethical problem**

We have the justified apprehension that while on the one hand our knowledge keeps on expanding, on the other our ability to discern good from bad is diminishing; we are in danger of becoming technological giants and moral dwarfs. And yet, as several Pontiffs have stressed, the ecological problem is above all else an ethical problem. That is why, in this World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, we want to deliver this message to our peers and to all men and women of good will. We do so fully aware that if on one hand scientific data are sounding an warning bell that it would be imprudent at best not to acknowledge, on the other we must also emphasize that trend does not mean destiny and that corrective actions are still possible.

The first thing is to rediscover the truth of nature as a gift from the Creator who has bestowed onto humankind the duty of the Guardians. This is indeed the message that Pope Francis has delivered to the world from the beginning



of his Pontificate, an invitation in accordance with the *magisterium* of his predecessors on these matters. Thus, while we eagerly await this encounter with the successor of Peter, we want to proffer once again this message, this time from us the youth to the world.

There has always been a natural bond between youth and ecology. As was noted by Pope Benedict XVI, it was indeed the youth that first recognized that “in our relation with nature, there is something askew; nature has its own dignity and we must follow its advice”.

Pope John Paul II, who promoted the World Youth Day, had reminded us that alongside the generally understood view of the environment there is a human ecology. And Pope Francis, beginning with the choice of his name, has brought to the forefront the saint who, before anyone else, taught us to call brothers and sisters the elements of nature, the water and the sun, and who invited us to respect God’s creatures and the environment in which they live and in which we ourselves live in their company.

### **Our requests, our commitments**

The scientific data that were alluded to require responsible, foresighted and timely decisions. Our parents and we are the first generations to be aware of what is at stake and of the negative consequences that would ensue should necessary measures not be adopted.

### **Of the world governments and international organizations we ask**

not to deprive us of our future;

not to let our hopes fall victim to shortsighted interests that engender contrary viewpoints and vetoes that lead to a dangerous immobility;

to take all necessary actions to avoid reaching a point of no return beyond which our planet could become inhospitable to human life;

to limit to the extent possible the emission of greenhouse gases by adopting alternative, clean energy sources already at our disposal;

to foster research, development and availability to all of new clean energy sources;

to try and promote lifestyles based on a sustainable use of natural and energy sources;

to view financial resources to accomplish such goals as an investment on behalf and in favor of future generations, not as a cost;

to protect the biodiversity and the sources of clean, fresh water of our planet.



### **We ask the world mass media**

to be vigilant to ensure that necessary measures are indeed implemented;

not to fall victims to disinformation campaigns motivated by self-interest;

to publicize the scientific results and stress the ethical aspects of the problem thus contributing to the formation of a truly ecological awareness.

### **We pledge**

to respect the true nature of the human being as the culmination of the Creation, in harmony with nature following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi;

to rediscover the vocation of the guardians of the Creation and to be guardians of others as Pope Francis has taught us;

to highlight the ethical component of the choices made as guardians of the Creation, as stressed by Pope Benedict XVI;

to promote a human ecology, as Pope John Paul II has stressed;

to change our lifestyles so as to be guardians of the Creation for future generations;

to promote the efficient and shared use of the resources at our disposal;

to put pressure, with all pacific and legal means available, to ensure that the world governments and the international organizations undertake the necessary measures and in particular pursue the search for new, clean energy sources;

to promote this culture and this vocation among our peers and to all men and women of good will so that everyone can experience the beauty of being guardians of the Creation.