

POST-SYNODAL  
APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION  
***ECCLESIA IN OCEANIA***  
OF HIS HOLINESS  
**POPE JOHN PAUL II**  
TO THE BISHOPS  
PRIESTS AND DEACONS  
MEN AND WOMEN  
IN THE CONSECRATED LIFE  
AND ALL THE LAY FAITHFUL

ON JESUS CHRIST  
AND THE PEOPLES OF OCEANIA:  
WALKING HIS WAY,  
TELLING HIS TRUTH,  
LIVING HIS LIFE

*The Environment*

31. Oceania is a part of the world of great natural beauty, and it has succeeded in preserving areas that remain unspoiled. The region still offers to indigenous peoples a place to live in harmony with nature and one another.<sup>(108)</sup> Because creation was entrusted to human stewardship, the natural world is not just a resource to be exploited but also a reality to be respected and even revered as a gift and trust from God. It is the task of human beings to care for, preserve and cultivate the treasures of creation. The Synod Fathers called upon the people of Oceania to rejoice always in the glory of creation in a spirit of thanksgiving to the Creator.

Yet the natural beauty of Oceania has not escaped the ravages of human exploitation. The Synod Fathers called upon the governments and peoples of Oceania to protect this precious environment for present and future generations.<sup>(109)</sup> It is their special responsibility to assume on behalf of all humanity stewardship of the Pacific Ocean, containing over one half of the earth's total supply of water. The continued health of this and other oceans is crucial for the welfare of peoples not only in Oceania but in every part of the world.

The natural resources of Oceania need to be protected against the harmful policies of some industrialized nations and increasingly powerful transnational corporations which can lead to deforestation, despoliation of the land, pollution of rivers by mining, over-fishing of profitable species, or fouling the fishing-grounds with industrial and nuclear waste. The dumping of nuclear waste in the area constitutes an added danger to the health of the indigenous population. Yet it is also important to recognize that industry can bring great benefits when undertaken with due respect for the rights and the culture of the local population and for the integrity of the environment.

Document found on 4/15/2004 at

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_20011122\\_ecclesia-in-oceania\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20011122_ecclesia-in-oceania_en.html)