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**Eat Less Meat this Lent**

Dear Parishioners,

Last year Pope Francis published an encyclical called Laudato Si. It expressed his concern about climate change, pollution and the threat this poses to some of the world’s poorest people. The Pope says we all have a duty to do what we can to meet ‘the urgent challenge to protect our common home’. Bishop Philip wrote to us about it in September saying that everyone in the Diocese should consider how to respond to the Pope’s call.

Laudato Si was the subject of two talks for Catholics in Reading before Christmas, and as a result the priests of the pastoral area want to suggest that we all try to eat less meat during Lent.

There is of course a long Catholic tradition of abstaining from meat in Lent. For how it would help the environment please see overleaf.

So, what are we suggesting? As a minimum, that **we should all eat at least one less meal containing meat each week than we do at present.**

We have to begin somewhere. As Pope Francis tells us in his encyclical, ‘Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience.’

***Canon Michael Dennehy, Canon John O’Shea, Fr Stanislaw Gibzinski***

***Fr Pat Madden, Fr Bonaventure Ndong Che, Fr Richard Maniak***

 

* Livestock farming is responsible for 15% of greenhouse gas emissions, the same as all the world’s vehicles put together *(Royal Institute for International Affairs)*. Most scientists think greenhouse gases add to global warming, which in turn contributes to severe drought in some parts of the world, and floods in others.
* Huge areas of forest in the Amazon and elsewhere, which could soak up some of the gases, are being cleared every year to farm cattle and grow soya beans for animal feeds.
* It takes 15,000 litres of water to produce a single kilo of beef, compared with just 287 litres for a kilo of potatoes *(Institute of Mechanical Engineers)*. The animals we eat are increasingly fed on crops imported from hotter countries where water shortage can be a serious problem.
* The world’s growing population needs ever more space, but is also eating more and more meat. Animals need 20 times more land than it takes to grow the equivalent amount of grain or vegetables *(Cornell University).*