

## **Executive Summary**

### **Environmental Concerns and the Dignity and Inviolability of the Human Person**

Environmental issues are on the political agenda across the world, as governments and international bodies seek to balance the demands of growth with the longer term protection of the planet.

Catholics have a moral duty to engage with the political processes, but to do so in an informed and intelligent way, ready to challenge apparently easy solutions that are contrary to the Catholic imperative of respecting the dignity of all human beings. Catholics must, in particular, remain vigilant to discern any hidden agendas, especially where genuine environmental concerns may be used to impose on poorer countries an agenda of population control, contraception and abortion.

Sacred Scripture offers clear guidelines on the proper relationship between man and nature. Man is given stewardship of the earth, but the nature of that stewardship is to be characterised by benevolence as well as control. The relationship between people is to be governed by mutual love and respect; stewardship of the earth includes obligations to the poor; the killing of the innocent is clearly and repeatedly condemned. Solidarity with other creatures is also specified in the Ten Commandments and elsewhere, where the Sabbath rest extends even to cattle.

Environmental concerns are regularly being linked to the notion of population control. United Nations papers, for example, speak of the need to slow population growth in developing regions. These notions are invariably expressed in innocuous and even appealing terms – gender equality, reproductive health, security – but we do not have to look far beneath the surface to find the real intentions here. The concept of “gender equality”, for example, is specifically defined to include access to contraception and to “safe” abortions, collectively part of the package of “sexual and reproductive health”. Hilary Clinton, for example, has stated that “you cannot have maternal health without reproductive health. And reproductive health includes contraception and family planning and access to legal, safe abortion”.

The real danger here is that Catholics – both clergy and lay – are being seduced by attractive language that conceals real intentions that are wholly anti-Catholic. Those intentions include the imposition of abortion, contraception and forced sterilisation. Pope St John Paul II was aware of that danger, and warned that “only respect for life can be the foundation and guarantee of the most precious and essential goods of society”. Man’s ultimate end is to know and love God and to be able to enjoy his presence for eternity, but that end cannot be achieved if we go directly against His law. The protection of the environment in which man lives is a proper and important goal, but that goal is doomed to failure if we try to achieve it by means of immoral policies, including abortion and infanticide.