**Hoping for a Green Recovery**

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Covid has had a massive effect on the world, many are detrimental, but it has had a number of positive effects on the environment that show hope for the future of our planet.

The wellbeing of our planet is essential to our own wellbeing. Pope Francis recently pointed out that “we cannot expect to grow on a material level without taking care of the common home that houses us” Exploiting nature ultimately means exploiting other people.

Covid has been an indication that all is not well with the wellbeing of our planet but the actions taken to combat it have had some positive results on the health of the planet.

For example, it has brought a sudden drop in carbon emissions. We are told that levels of air pollution have dropped by nearly 50% because of measures to contain the virus. Nitrogen dioxide emissions are fading away. For some of us it has reduced the effects of asthma, it has increased the sound of the birds, it has increased our use of green spaces but of course the fear is that these benefits will be temporary. In Leeds proposals to introduce a clean air zone have been dropped, at least for the time being, because of the improvement in air quality.

We have seen the environmental advantages from reduced air travel and, during the lock down, from reduced motor travel. Use of mediums such as Zoom for meetings will continue and will have a lasting reduction on carbon emissions. Increased working from home will result in reduced commuting. The danger is however that the lessons learned during the pandemic will be forgotten as soon as a vaccine becomes available.

Throughout history, we have ignored the rationale that says that looking after our planet is essential to its wellbeing. We have chased economic gain at the expense of our own environment and at the expense of our fellow world citizens. Disasters have resulted in reduced levels of CO2 but have been followed by economic recovery that has had no regard to the planets needs

Will the same occur following Covid or will we learn from the past? Will the economic crisis that will follow the pandemic take our minds away from the environmental needs of our planet.

The best time to intervene and effect lasting change is now. Interventions are always more effective if they take place at a time of change. People may well change their attitude to a number of things, for example, working from home so why not also alter their approach to a much bigger thing - the environmental needs of the planet. Why not a lasting change to reduce travel or cutting down on food waste. There are easy wins to be had as shown by the ten pledges suggested by our Diocese.

Obviously, we would not have chosen a global pandemic to be a catalyst for change, but it has the potential to do that and we can all encourage that outcome. Pope Francis compares how we live our lives as protectors of creation to the story of the Good Samaritan. By protecting the environment, we protect the planet and we protect our fellow human beings in all parts of the world from the harm that they suffer when pollution is allowed to run riot by us.

By protecting the environment, we offer hope for the future.