

Hello from ARC.

We have plenty of news this month, including a Muslim Theology of the Sea that has come out of one of the projects ARC worked with in Tanzania, a new brochure, a new partner in India, and a new regional eco-newsletter by and for Catholic schools, which we believe could be a model for faith schools everywhere.

1. A Practical Islamic Theology of the Sea

Last month a Muslim Theology of the Sea was published by ARC's long-term partner the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES). It was initially part of a Teachers' guidebook to promote conservation among the Muslim fishing families on Misali Island in Tanzania who had been threatening the fragile coral environment - and the future of the fish stocks - through their dynamite fishing. Through ARC's help it has now been reworked as a general Islamic Theology of the Sea, containing wisdom that can be applied to any marine conservation programme in Islamic areas.

It divides the teachings of the Qur'an that relate to marine management into six themes. They begin with Tawhid (with Allah as law-giver), continue through Fasad (acknowledging the human capacity for mischief) and conclude with the role of human beings as khalifa or "stewards" of creation. The full text can be read [here](http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=233): (<http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=233>).

2. A New Brochure

We now have a new 12-page brochure, which is an overview of what ARC is, how we work, and some of the unique projects that we and our partners around the world have made happen.

While creating the brochure I was brought back to something we drew together a few years ago from diverse sources, but roughly based on the traditional seven stages of pilgrimage. It consists of seven guidelines on how to create successful environment programmes.

These include forming partnerships rather than working as individuals, asking questions rather than giving answers and valuing the strength that comes from difference – which is critical when working with many different faiths and cultures. The guideline that always moves me is the suggestion to be pilgrims not missionaries.

How many of us in the NGO world in particular “go on mission”, with the sense of bringing a message to others, and persuading them to act in a certain way? It's always a temptation. But what if we all went as pilgrims – humbly, knowing that the person (ie ourself) who set out on the journey will change as a result? And what if we extended that sense of specialness and humility to every business meeting, overseas trip, or project that we undertook, whether in our public or private life? I imagine that many things would be so much easier, and perhaps so much more wonderful as well.

I attach the brochure as a fairly low resolution pdf file; it's also available on our website to download or we could send you the 16MB file by email if you need it. There's also a new A4 leaflet [there](#), (<http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/ARC%20general%20leaflet%20printing.pdf>), in the same section.

3. Eco-Newsletters

Last year, ARC was invited to help the Catholic diocese of Clifton in Bristol, England, work out how to start a programme for environmental action. The result of that initiative was The [Sound of Many Waters](#), (<http://www.soundofmanywaters.org/>) which began last September, and will be coming to a finale on October 4th – St Francis's feast day – after a year of starting to live and think more ecologically. The programme has included talks, walks, conferences, liturgies and music.

It has also resulted – after extensive discussion with teachers in Catholic schools in the Clifton Diocese – in a new network of information-sharing between Catholic Schools about the environment. The network is linked with a regular newsletter sent out and compiled by ARC but containing information and stories from the schools themselves. We are now on issue 3 but have already had a surprising number of people from beyond our geographical and faith-specific bounds all wanting to be linked up. We have also uncovered some inspiring examples, including one Catholic school for 5-13 year olds which on Earth Day dedicated the entire syllabus for every student to environmental activities, including eco-maths, stream clearing, den designing, and making a bird out of willow (a material indigenous to Somerset). The pupils loved it – and so did the parents, teachers and no doubt the denizens of the school stream. The school - All Hallows in Somerset, was generous enough to share the details of how they did it – and the full schedule will be featured in our next the eco Catholic school newsletter in a week or two's time.

You can download the first schools newsletters [here](#) (<http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=216>), the second [here](#), (<http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=225>), and the third [here](#) (<http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=230>).

Or if you'd like to be added to the distribution list please email info@arcworld.org. It would be helpful if you could briefly give details about what school and faith connections you have, as well as giving us an idea of your geographical location, so we can keep track of our readership.

If you're in the Bristol area, Martin Palmer will be giving a talk entitled "Saints and Sustainability" on Thursday June 5 at Clifton Cathedral, as part of The Sound of Many Waters programme. For other talks and events please see our [new diary news page](#) (<http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=231>) on the ARC website.

4. A New Partner

ARC's latest religious partner in the bid to protect the natural environment is the Church of South India, representing some 3.8 million members in India and around the world. In April the Bishop of the Madhya Kerala Diocese, Bishop Thomas Samuel issued through ARC [an inspiring statement](http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=133) (<http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=133>) emphasising that "our aim is to keep this beautiful world beautiful and not turning it into a wasteland" – and giving the debate a particularly Vedic angle.

In Hinduism, the Bishop said, there is no separation between the Divine and nature. "Both are the same aspects of the same reality. Like the ocean, Brahma the Creator is the unmanifest depths of the sea. Everything is Brahman, or as it is said; "Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma."

"Everything is the very aspect of the same reality, and everything is sacred. Christians too can share in this Vedic vision of unity which is the basis for an ecological approach, in which human beings can honour the entire universe. There are many sacred places to Hindus. Christians too sing of the beauty of the earth but seem to have no difficulty in polluting that which is holy. We should not ignore our high calling. All things are connected."

He gave some very practical suggestions for the members of Church of South India to take, to protect the earth - including recycling, using less energy, influencing the governments, developing our thoughts on eco-spirituality and learning to eat lower on the food chain. "Reducing the animal products in our diet is perhaps the single most-effective step we can make," he said. Link [here](http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=224) (<http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=224>) for the story.

5. Next Newsletter

I hope to be in touch in a few weeks time with details of the major programme we are finalising with the UN. Meanwhile I will leave you with the thought-provoking story with which Bishop Thomas Samuel in Kerala ended a talk he gave during a week-long conference on faith and the environment earlier this year.

There was a wise man, a hermit in the Himalayas, and people used to go to him to find answers. One day a little boy thought of an idea for tricking the hermit. "I'm going to get a small bird and hold it in my hand," he told his friends in the village. "And I will say: is it dead or is it alive? And if he says it is dead then I will release it, and if he says it is alive then I will crush it.' Either way, he will be wrong. So the boy went to see the wise man, and he did what he had boasted. But the hermit looked into his eyes and could see what he was planning.

Eventually he answered the boy: "It will be," he said slowly, "what you want it to be." And this story illustrates what we can do about the environment. It will be what we want it to be. If we can have a vision and communicate it to others, then we will have a powerful role in transmitting a sense of reverence

for this world.

With best wishes,

[ARC](http://www.arcworld.org/) (<http://www.arcworld.org/>)

If you have friends or colleagues who would like to be kept in touch with ARC, then please ask them to contact us on arcworld@arcworld.org.