24 May is the Fifth anniversary of the publication of Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’.* Members of the Archdiocesan Ecology, Justice and Peace Commission’s Integral Ecology Committee offer reflections on how the encyclical inspires change and action in their lives.

**How can I make changes? –** Mgsr Gerard Burns

*Laudato Si’* challenges us to change, conversion in how we act with regard to the care of the earth. As a person who lives largely within the technocratic paradigm that rules our world today I wonder how I can make the practical and spiritual changes to ensure the earth and its peoples can live well.

The practical changes are in terms of reducing my carbon output and waste production. The reduce-reuse-recycle summation is a great guide. I’m still working on it because of consumerist capitalism’s grip on me.

The spiritual changes are also a challenge because of an inherited outlook that separates God from the Earth. Heaven was beyond this earth and universe, material things are ‘secondary’ to ‘spiritual’ matters, recognition of the sacredness of plants, animals, mountains and rivers ran the risk of paganism or pantheism.

Even as I write this I know that in terms of Catholic spirituality and theology I exaggerate. The scriptures often speak of creation as revealing the glory of God (Psalm 19:1-2) even with the proviso that God is more than material things and in fact the Creator. And God saw all made by Godself as ‘very good’. So the created world, the earth and its beings, cannot be despised or maltreated.

The Incarnation of the Word in Jesus means that God became ‘enfleshed’ as a human being, therefore took material form. That is not just human form, important as that is, but the human body is made up of the elements and chemicals that make up the rest of the earth. So God is present in that sense in everything on earth.

So if our ‘spirituality’ is to be holistic it cannot be separate from our practical life but in the deepest way. Reducing-recycling-reusing are basic spiritual practices for a non-dualistic care for God’s gift, our earth, our common home.