

December 3, 2006

My Dear People,

In this season we give thanks to God for his gift of creation: the air we breathe, the water that sustains life, the fruits of the land that nourish us, and the entire web of life without which human life cannot flourish.

One way to give thanks is to join in the public discussion of what is called global climate change. This complex question has been brought home to us in southwest Kansas by the Sunflower Electric Power Corporation's desire to build three coal-fired power plants in Finney County.

Why would the Church be interested in this? Not because of any scientific expertise, of course: the Church has none. Not because of any economic expertise: the Church has none of this either. And not because of any political expertise: the Church has none of this as well. What she brings to the question is a profound respect for the fact of creation, and a profound interest in the survival of the one human family.

That respect and that interest leave the Church concerned. Our enfolding blanket of air, our atmosphere that protects us, seems itself in need of protection. A broad consensus of modern science seems to be forming. It says that what we do may be altering the earth's atmosphere in serious ways, causing the earth to trap more of the sun's heat, resulting in what is called global warming.

What causes this change in the atmosphere? Emissions from cars and trucks, industry and electric plants, and businesses and homes are the largest part of the answer. We seem to be causing it by the choices we make.

And so our central ethical question is: how are we to fulfill God's call to be stewards of creation at a time when we may have the capacity to alter that creation significantly and perhaps irrevocably? How are we to be stewards of creation in a way that preserves our land, and air, and water? How are we to be stewards of creation in a way that passes on these treasures to our children's children?

The Sunflower discussion is more than an economic question. It is more than a regulatory question. It is more than a political question. At the heart of it is the ethical question: what is a good steward to do? We give thanks to God for the gift of creation by making sure that question gets asked.

-- Most Rev. Ronald M. Gilmore
Bishop of Dodge City