



Hope for the world

The Hope Of A Cliff-Top Walk At Sunset

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For me, hope is a firm belief that through God's grace, the justice and love of God's kingdom will be reflected here on earth.

On a personal level, the hope I have is recharged by immersing myself in the natural world through people around me and by my faith. Spending time surrounded by the wonders of God's creation clears my head and refreshes me in ways that nothing else can.

I live by the sea. And after walking the cliffs with my dog at sunset, the wind blowing away the cobwebs of a busy week, how can I not be hopeful? My hope is also kindled by the people in my life, the communion of love which is my family and friends and those who I meet with my work – including my wonderful colleagues.

In my role as director of CAFOD, I visit people in some of the world's poorest countries. As I speak with farmers, fisher-folk and indigenous people. I witness their sense of community and their incredible sense of connection with creation.

Many depend on the natural world directly for survival in a way that I do not. But even so, they don't see nature as merely a resource to be used and cast aside – but an ecology to be cherished. It has deep spiritual importance, a gift from God, from their ancestors, to safeguard for their children.

I've also seen that sense of connection when I've visited LiveSimply parishes here in England and Wales – parishes who have committed as communities and as individuals, to waste less, choose green solutions, support poor communities and campaign for change.

So what tests my hope?

Our relationship with creation and each other is becoming fractured in so many ways. No single issue will have larger impact on humanity over the coming years than climate change.

So far this has not affected us much in Britain. But many poor communities around the globe feel the effects of climate change right now – with unpredictable and severe weather making life harder for people who are already so vulnerable.

In recent years, I have met people in Mozambique, Myanmar, Kenya and the Philippines, and heard their concerns about the impact the increased floods, droughts or storms will have on their way of life and their survival. All are hoping to be heard by world leaders meeting in Paris soon to agree a new climate deal.

My hope is underpinned by a faith that sees every person as an instrument of hope, because we are one human family created in the image of God – and part of his creation.

The importance of both caring for God's gift of creation and caring for the poor runs through centuries of Catholic teaching – and was explored indepth by Pope Francis in his recent encyclical. His manifest simplicity and a sense of social justice – in the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi – gives me hope that these crucial issues can be brought alive for a new generation.

I hope and pray the Christian community continues to hear the call to witness to God's love – by bringing together our faith and the actions of our daily lives.



Chris Bain has been Director of CAFOD since 2003. He has also served in key roles at VSO and Oxfam.

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A Rocha UK 18–19 Avenue Road, Southall, UB1 3BL, UK
t: 020 8574 5935 e: uk@arocha.org w: arocha.org.uk
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