



GO GREEN FOR LENT

WEEK FOUR:
FOOD WASTE / MEAT & DAIRY

Bishop Helen-Ann reflects:

A couple of years ago, at The Oxford Farming Conference, I heard an inspiring talk by farmer Jimmy Shanks who, along with his family runs Standhill farm in the Scottish borders (near Hawick). Jimmy and his family are now the 3rd generation of the family on that farm. Originally, Standhill was an exclusively dairy farm, but now it is Scotland's only producer of tomatoes. From their website: "We're proud to represent a working, vibrant and sustainable rural economy producing food and energy fit for the 21st century. With our 500 acres we produce 2 million litres of milk a year, 1600MW of clean green electricity, 8500MW of renewable heat as well as 300 tons of mouth-watering red tomatoes." Jimmy's farm converts cow slurry to fuel and harvests methane to power a gas engine that is connected to a generator that produces renewable electricity with what is not needed on the farm going into the national grid.

I start with this example, because I am acutely aware that food and farming are all about balance: care for the environment, for animals, and ultimately for consumers. It's often easy to criticise farming for negative environmental impact when in fact so many farmers are at the forefront of innovation and positive ethical practices.

For some time now, Myles and I have bought cheese from The Ethical Dairy, which is in Gatehouse of Fleet, Castle Douglas. Responding to a concern over the intensification of dairy farming, David and Wilma Finlay set about changing their own farm to enable calves (including male calves) with their mothers to suckle (rather than separating them away from their mothers). David says: "Put simply, we don't want to have the choose between doing what we think is right and staying in business." (Their cheese is absolutely delicious!).

These two examples of balanced food production and close attention to animal welfare show us that good practice is possible. Closer to home, within our diocese, there are many charities that work to use surplus food to individuals and families who are facing economic hardship: FareShare North East and the Full Circle Food Project are two examples (based in Westerhope, Newcastle; and Ashington). There may be one near where you are based too.

Prayer

*Lord Jesus,
You understand what it is like to be hungry.
Teach us to have grateful and generous hearts.
Forgive us when we make selfish choices
or remain silent in the face of injustice.*

*Lord Jesus,
You welcomed all to your table.
May we recognise our interconnectedness,
with our common home and our global
neighbours,
so all are invited to share the feast.*

*Lord Jesus,
You come to us as bread and wine.
Fill us with your compassion.
Nourish us as we advocate for change,
and seek to make your Kingdom a reality in our world.
Amen.
(CAFOD)*