

## Foreword

I confess that I was granted the grace of a favourable year of birth: For I was able to experience my youth in the 1970s, the time when environmental awareness in Germany experienced its first major springtime. Ecological thinking was therefore passed on to me not only through my nature-loving family, but also through the social developments of that time, which have shaped me to this day.

Environmental protection at that time was mainly focused on resource issues—global warming was not yet known about, and the biodiversity problem was known about, but not in its global dimension. So, for countless classmates I became the middleman of recycled paper, which was not yet available in stationery shops at that time. As the son of parents who had no car and no driver's licence, I forwent getting a driving licence and a car at the age of 18 and travelled to meetings and weekend events organised by the Catholic youth association, even over medium distances, mostly by bicycle. My first letters to the editor in regional newspapers also date back to this time, on questions of transport policy and against the Grafenrheinfeld nuclear power plant, which was under construction at the time.

In my first years as a priest, I was able to build well on my earlier experiences. Working in regional environmental initiatives enriched my career greatly, and some contacts from that time have remained until today. While we had to bury the Lohr–Marktheidenfeld–Wertheim railway line at the end of 1990 in a symbolic act because its demolition was to begin a few days later, we were ultimately able to save the Saale Valley Railway between Gemünden, Hammelburg and Bad Kissingen through numerous activities in the years 1993 to 1996—although some of our demands at that time to make transport on this line more attractive are only now being realised. The decades-long commitment to the Hafenlohr valley, to which I could only make a very small contribution, was also ultimately successful. Parallel to this, I was able to get involved in the environmental work of the diocese of Würzburg and support developments there, the fruits of which can still be seen today.

So, I felt it was a lucky coincidence that my habilitation supervisor, Prof. Dr Bernhard Fraling (1929–2013), recommended that I write my habilitation thesis on "Care for Creation in the Conciliar Process of the

Christian Churches 1983–1989" (Michael Rosenberger 2001). In terms of content, for me this meant coming home to a familiar world and the opportunity to combine my two great heartfelt concerns—the Christian faith and environmental protection—in an academic way.

Since then, the themes of Christian environmental ethics have run through my academic research and teaching. In great interdisciplinarity, research projects and working groups emerged that broadened my horizons enormously, but in which I was also able to experience that the specific contribution of theological ethics is desired and recognised as important. I am very grateful for the collegial cooperation and human esteem that characterise(d) these groups.

In addition to my academic work, since 2004 I have been able to support the environmental work of the Diocese of Linz internally and maintain many contacts with the environmental movement externally. Remarkable projects have emerged from this, both within and outside the church. In this context, I quickly made contact with Fridays for Future Upper Austria in March 2019 and was involved in the founding of Scientists for Future Upper Austria and Religions for Future Austria.

This book is therefore indebted to countless people, whose names would never end and would always remain incomplete, which is why I refrain from mentioning them. Those I am referring to, please feel addressed.

A few days before the completion of my manuscript, "Christian Environmental Ethics" by my colleague Markus Vogt, with whom I have been associated for about 25 years, was published by Herder-Verlag. Due to the different theological subjects for which we are responsible—Markus Vogt for Christian social ethics, I for moral theology—we have very different approaches to the topic. The difference in approach, however, is mutually enriching due to the great agreement in our professional assessments. Thus, it is only due to the necessity of completing the manuscript that I could not include Vogt's environmental ethics in this book.

Finally, my thanks go to Charlotte Cremer for her extremely accurate proofreading of the German-language manuscript and numerous valuable suggestions, and to Dr Bernward Kröger of Aschendorff-Verlag for his usual reliable editing of the German edition of the book. I would also like to thank Beate Bernstein from Nomos-Verlag for accompanying the English translation presented here.

With the publication of this book, I hope that it will stimulate and enrich professional discussions beyond the German-speaking world, but above all that the spiritual resources from 2000 years of Christian tradition will give us strength and orientation to walk the path of ecological conversion together.

*Linz, May 2022*

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