

“ENVISIONING A BETTER TOMORROW”

FEATHERS OF A BIRD

“The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say - we will never forgive you.” This is quoted by a 16-year-old Swedish environmental activist, Greta Thunberg, in the United Nations Climate Change Summit. There is no future without the present. If people want a better future, the start of action for a change has to happen today. We can't expect to grasp a good and healthy future if we can't make a difference today. As we all know, we care for what we own. We repair it if it's broken and can no longer be fixed. In contrasting matters, not everything we own, we repair. By way of illustration, our environment. The majority of us know it needs help. Yet only a small proportion of us took action to fix it. Unlike other objects our environment cannot be thrown away, neither can it be replaced. Though we can fix and change it for the greater good. For change to happen it needs all of us, the seniors, adults, and especially the youths.

The environmental issues became a noticeable problem in the 1960s and early 1970s. People started noticing the drastic harm they did to the environment. There is no exact period on when this all happened. Nevertheless, it's still a problem today. But this time it got worse. Pollution became a major issue in the 20th century. The percentage of the world population that is exposed to unhealthy air is more than 90%. In 2016, this caused about 4.2 million premature deaths. This also contributes to global warming.

Greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide lead to warmer temperatures. This causes the glaciers to melt thus rises the sea level. Extreme weather events are also caused by global warming. According to the government monitoring data, up to 58% of the groundwater tested is contaminated with coliform. It is a bacteria that are present in the environment and the feces of all warm-blooded animals and humans. Water pollution is a major problem in the Philippines, with at least 43,000 tons of garbage dumped in the water. This puts the humans and underwater species at risk.

For the past decade, 462 species have been declared extinct. A quarter of mammals today are at risk of extinction. For instance the Amur Leopard, Bornean Orangutan, Cross River Gorilla, and many more. Forest and wildlife are extremely important and needed to be protected, for the reason that everything is linked together. From plants to animals to humans. The connection can be represented as a web. Once one of the species is harmed others will be affected. On a web, when one strand broke others connected to it would snap as well. The more strands are broken, the more disrupted the web will be. Even the smallest of bees can make a huge difference. Bees have the ability to help a plant grow and produce food. This is due to the fact that they are adapted to pollinate.

Trees have a very important role in this world. They contribute a lot of beneficial things to us. For instance, they absorb carbon dioxide and give out oxygen, give shade,

help avoid soil erosion, and provide habitats for those in need. Trees can contribute more than that. They help reduce sound pollution, which is a huge problem today. They also help improve mental health. People who spend more time around trees are less stressed and calmer. There will also be less demand for air conditioning.

A lot of articles stated that during the pandemic our environment is slowly starting to improve because of lockdown. This information can be true. With fewer people using vehicles, there will be less contribution to greenhouse gases. The air quality has been improved which leads to 11,000 fewer deaths. This is the good news we have. Unfortunately, the change is temporary. The lockdown will someday be over. Everything that happened before this lockdown will happen again, or it could be worse. There is an increase in waste during this pandemic. People started buying online and disposable masks and gloves have somehow ended up in the ocean.

Plenty of actions have been taken to deal with the environmental issues we have today. For example recycling. We recycle to reduce the number of plastics getting to places it shouldn't be. It is indeed a great idea. Even so in reality, it is not entirely effective. Only 9% of plastics are recycled. There are also rules concerning the protection of both forests and wildlife. In particular the Republic Act no. 9147, Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection act. There are a good number of organizations in regards to the environment and to the protection of wildlife, in which people can join and support. Whether it is adults or youths. Youths have a special role in this. This is

because they are the hope of the next generation. When they grow up, they'll pass their knowledge to the youth of the next generation and so on. Examples of organizations include Greenpeace, The Nature Conservancy, Defenders of Wildlife, and many more.

Killing nature is like killing ourselves. We depend on nature for our daily needs. We need it just like it needs us. Since we all live in this world, all of us must help and protect it. It takes a team to make a difference. A team can be represented as feathers of a bird. A bird can't fly with just one or a handful of feathers. It needs more so that it can fly towards its beautiful destination. We are like the feathers, we work together to get to our destination. That destination is our future. A good and healthy future. It takes a team to envision and create a better tomorrow.