31. Oceania is a part of the world of great natural beauty, and it has succeeded in
preserving areas that remain unspoiled. The region still offers to indigenous peoples a
place to live in harmony with nature and one another.\(^{(108)}\) Because creation was entrusted
to human stewardship, the natural world is not just a resource to be exploited but also a
reality to be respected and even reverenced as a gift and trust from God. It is the task of
human beings to care for, preserve and cultivate the treasures of creation. The Synod
Fathers called upon the people of Oceania to rejoice always in the glory of creation in a
spirit of thanksgiving to the Creator.

Yet the natural beauty of Oceania has not escaped the ravages of human exploitation. The
Synod Fathers called upon the governments and peoples of Oceania to protect this
precious environment for present and future generations.\(^{(109)}\) It is their special
responsibility to assume on behalf of all humanity stewardship of the Pacific Ocean,
containing over one half of the earth's total supply of water. The continued health of this
and other oceans is crucial for the welfare of peoples not only in Oceania but in every
part of the world.

The natural resources of Oceania need to be protected against the harmful policies of
some industrialized nations and increasingly powerful transnational corporations which
can lead to deforestation, despoliation of the land, pollution of rivers by mining, over-
fishing of profitable species, or fouling the fishing-grounds with industrial and nuclear
waste. The dumping of nuclear waste in the area constitutes an added danger to the health
of the indigenous population. Yet it is also important to recognize that industry can bring
great benefits when undertaken with due respect for the rights and the culture of the local
population and for the integrity of the environment.