

Wednesday Earth Wisdom

Wednesday, October 19



Message From Reclaiming Earth Committee – Wednesday Earth Wisdom:

The holidays are close upon us, beginning with Halloween, moving to Thanksgiving and then Christmas and so on. A large part of the food served during the holidays contains chocolate, or cocoa, as an ingredient.

What do we know about chocolate? It is a product of the cacao bean which grows “primarily in the tropical climates of Western Africa, Asia and Latin America ... commonly referred to as cocoa. West African countries, mostly Ghana and the Ivory Coast, supply more than 70% of the world’s cocoa.” ([Source](#))

In recent years, some organizations and journalists have exposed the widespread use of child labor and slavery on West African cocoa farms. Children as young as five have been seen working on the cocoa farms. Some children climb the trees, machetes in hand, to cut the bean pods.

These children are exposed to chemicals, without the use of protective clothing. They often are fed the cheapest food available. They are sometimes beaten and locked into their sleeping areas if they try to escape (see www.foodispower.org)

Buying fair-trade chocolate can help, but it’s no guarantee that child labor was not used. [Fairtrade International](#) is working with communities to end the use of child labor in the cocoa and coffee industries.

Francis reminds us that, “There is also pollution that affects everyone, caused by transport, industrial fumes, substances which contribute to the acidification of soil and water, fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, herbicides and agrotoxins in general ... Industrial waste and chemical products utilized in cities and agricultural areas can lead to bioaccumulations in the organisms of the local population, even when levels of toxins in those places are low. Frequently, no measures are taken until after people’s health has been irreversibly affected.” (Par. 20 *Laudato Si*)

Do you know from where your chocolate originates? Is it fair-trade? What can each of us do that might ease the pain and suffering of children working on these farms, to stop the use of child labor and/or slavery? Pray about it and see if you are led to action.