

12th Sun (B)

21st June 2015

'Praised be You, my Lord, through our sister, Mother Earth'

Job 38: The Lord is the creator of the seas

2Cor 5: *in Christ there is a new creation ...*

Mk 4: 35–41: *'Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey Him.'*

Our Lord's powerful word to the natural elements, uttered on the Sea of Galilee — "Quiet! Be calm!" — brought such a sense no wonder to the apostles out there in the storm. They began to know Him more truly as the true God, as the Lord of Creation itself. How extraordinary it must have been to be there on that boat as Jesus calmed the wind and waves with the briefest of commands! Whatever the apostles' estimation of Jesus up to then, now they surely knew Him to be the very same who had created the natural world. We profess every Sunday in the Creed that God is the "Maker of all things, visible and invisible" — and then we profess the Son of the God to be Him "through whom all things were made." This beautiful natural world, earth, that we have as home, is a gift of the Creator God to His beloved human creation. It is concerning our stewardship of the world — "care for our common home" — that the Pope's new Encyclical Letter, released this

week, speaks. Much has been made of the Pope's comments on climate change, though of course he doesn't go any further than good current science indicates about that. But the Pope's concerns are more for the poor, for the better care for our worldly home so as to benefit humanity more justly — all her children.

The title of the Encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, is taken from the opening words of St Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Creatures*, written back in 1225, a year before his death. One of the verses of his sacred poem runs:

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.

St Francis reflects in his *Canticle* the harmony of man with Nature, for we are part of that great act of God's kindness, even though we are also its most special part, set above it by God. But we are set above it to be its guardian and not its abuser. Sadly, too often, we have chosen through greed and laziness, instead, to be the world's abuser.

In our attempts to carers of our environment, I expect we try to each do our bit anyway, don't we? We are

obliged nowadays to recycle much of our waste, to use low-energy lightbulbs, to insulate our homes well ... And I am sure that we all do our best to waste as little water as possible, not to throw away too much food, and to seek out the 'FairTrade' label on supermarket items. These would all seem to be good Christian attitudes to the conservation of our environment. The world given us by God is a gift, and we should use that gift well, and not in wasteful or indifferent ways. But we must also remember that the gift is given to all humanity, and we have a duty to do our best to see that the world's resources are equitably shared. This may often seem a colossal task, given the centuries of greed that have made many inequalities almost set in stone.

The Pope calls on us to renew our vision of the earth as our "common home" — the home for all humanity — and to be reminded that it is, first and foremost, God's own Creation. He urges us to live simply, not to grab and grasp, but to give thanks for what we have and to be content with less. The Pope believes that many of the world's ills — the scourge of abortion; the ravaging of the ecology; lamely

blaming 'overpopulation'; the lack of political will to deal with world hunger; the abandonment of many of the elderly in our society to loneliness — are all interlinked, in human sins of rebellion against the Creator.

Let me leave the final words to Pope Francis himself (*Laudato Si'*, n. 13), a paragraph he entitles, 'My Appeal':

The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. Here I want to recognize, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of the home which we share. Particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world's poorest. Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded.

Let's be among those who hope, pray, and work in our own little way for that change, for a respect and care for God's beautiful world.