

25th Sunday (A)

24th September 2017

'Love in Action I: Care for Creation'

Is 55: *our God is rich in forgiving compassion* Ps 144: *The Lord is kind and full of compassion*
Phil 1: *Life to me is Christ; death would bring me more*
Mt 20: 1–16: *"Why be envious because I am generous?"*

We begin today our 6-week reflection on what is referred to as 'Catholic Social Teaching,' which is in effect the Gospel as applied to the world around us. We begin with the relationship we have with our material environment, the world around us, which we might term our 'care for Creation.' 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." And what did Jesus Himself say? "*Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ... Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*" 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 issued a powerful Encyclical Letter a couple of years ago. Much has been made of the Pope's comments on climate change, though 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 of our worldly home so as to benefit all humanity more justly — all the world's 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: for example, it's easier and cheaper to adopt 'slash and burn' techniques than 'sustainability' with regard to the world's great forests.

In our attempts to carers of our environment, I expect we try to each do our bit anyway, don't we, to be less wasteful? We are obliged nowadays to recycle much of our rubbish, 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, perhaps also to drive smaller cars, take fewer unnecessary journeys. 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 quote some words of Pope Francis himself (*Laudato Si'*, n.13), in a paragraph he entitles, 'My Appeal':

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.

In so many ways can we be respectful of the world's resources and adopt an attitude of awe for this beautiful home given us by God. As Pope Francis reiterates, “ ‘filling the earth and subduing it’ does not mean exploiting it, but nurturing it and protecting it.” ... “Let us not leave in our wake a swath of destruction and death which will affect our own lives and those of future generations.” (n. 215).

What should be the question in our minds as we consider this theme of ‘Care for Creation’? Maybe it should be: *What one thing can I do, that I don't yet do, to be more economical in the way I use this world's resources that God has given us to share justly and wisely?*