Irish Catholic Bishops Conference

**Homily Notes for each Sunday of the Season of Creation 2022**

*These notes can be adapted as appropriate for your setting*

**23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time C - Sunday 4th September 2022**

**Season of Creation 1 – Luke 14:25-33** by Sylvia Thompson

Today is the first Sunday in the Season of Creation, the time set aside by the church to both celebrate the gift of all God’s creation in our Common Home and, reflect on our role in caring for it. This year’s theme is a strong call to “Listen to the Voice of Creation”. We know, only too well, that we are at a crucial time for our common home with both climate change and biodiversity loss already impacting the lives of many people, their livelihoods and all life. So as Christians, how are we responding to these moral and ethical challenges? Do we recognise that like Moses in the story of the burning bush, we too are standing on “holy ground”? Of course, this call is not new and was put strongly to us by Pope Francis in his letter called Caring for Our Common Home…Laudato Si’ nearly 7 years ago now!

And how fitting that in today’s gospel, ‘Jesus turns around’ and asks us do we really want to be ‘his disciples’, his dedicated followers, to carry the cross? It’s a pretty big ask these days! We all have our own immediate responsibilities, family, farm, work, school, illnesses, sadnesses, so many other entanglements. We are sometimes lost in the ‘big crowd of followers’, living our lives, rushing around from one engagement to the next and now we are being asked to carry a cross on top of all this! Who is going to sign up for that, I ask you!

But we sign up for training for football and different sports, years of primary school then more in secondary school, degrees and further education courses, we sign contracts and some go as far as signing life contracts in marriage. So it seems that we can make commitments. Now, this Season of Creation, can we commit or sign up to protecting our actual home place, Our Common Home, the precious blue planet lovingly created by God as a home for all creation?

Can we respond to the threat of a total climate breakdown and devastating biodiversity loss? Are we willing to sign up to change our way of life, how we heat our homes, travel, farm, garden and even shop and eat? These are huge asks, in fact a new kind of cross. But this is a cross that we can embrace with joy and no doubt some pain too as we leave behind old ways of being. Joy can come as we work (with Jesus and others) dedicated followers in our communities to co-create a new and transformed Common Home, where farmers can feed their families, indigenous peoples can live in their home place, people in cities breathe clean air and all of us can have clean and safe drinking water and of course where nature and all God’s creatures can thrive.

Let us continue pray together and ask for the Holy Spirit to guide us as we begin our celebration of the Season of creation and take steps, no matter how small, to live in harmony with all of God’s creation, as we learn to walk more gently on Gods ‘holy ground’.

**Twenty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C – 11th September 2022**

**Season of Creation 2 – Luke 15:1-32** by Sally Simpson

In today’s Gospel from Luke 15, we have two brothers. And, as is sometimes the case in families, they don’t seem to have much of a relationship with each other. Yet both of them can proclaim “Our Father”.

One son “squandered his property in dissolute living” and we read that he is then faced with famine. During this Season of Creation, this text echoes the squandering of the earth’s resources. We have used and abused the resources of the earth with greed, placing “I” at the centre, dominating all of creation and God’s creatures. We are now seeing the consequences of this squandering as our world faces multiple environmental crises. We have squandered our inheritance and the inheritance of future generations. Our lack of wisdom and over consumption has led to massive extinction of animal and plant species, the oceans are dying, rainforests are being destroyed, the climate is in crisis. While this is the result of our lifestyles the consequences of our actions are being lived by our brothers and sisters in other parts of our common home. They are in poverty, they are homeless, without food and clean water, without education for the children, without health care. These are our brothers and sisters living in this way. Can we look at them and say with them “Our Father”?

Pope Francis tells us in Laudato Si’ that “Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth…The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now. (LS, 161). Laudato Si’ also tells us that “all is not lost”. Like the younger son in the parable today we can ‘come to our senses’, turn around, and make a new start. Each of us can do something, each of us has a role to play in order to bring healing to our common home. We ask “Our Father” for forgiveness and we can pledge to living out our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork.

As we all ‘come to our senses’ in relation to the climate and biodiversity crises, Pope Francis tells us in Laudato Si’ to never underestimate the power of small actions which can have a ripple effect across a community; he tells us that “Truly, much can be done!” (LS, 180).

So today, during this Season of Creation, we are invited to take up this call, to listen to the voice of creation and discern where we are being called to act, in our own homes, in our local communities, to care more deeply for our common home.

**Twenty Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Sunday 18th September 2022**

**Season of Creation 3 – Luke 16:1-13** by Jane Mellett

If you think that all the parables of Jesus are pleasant stories about people of integrity, then today’s gospel might make you think again. In this story, a manager has been given his notice by his CEO and decides, while he still can, to even up the tables for those who are struggling to pay their debts to the company. He uses the power he still has to change the future for these debtors – and for himself. He is happy to make better arrangements for the debtors. The manager is free-spirited, a bit of a scoundrel yes, but Jesus liked scoundrels, once their efforts were put to good use. The only value the money really has is in the way it is used. He is squandering money, but he is not squandering opportunities.

When it comes to the reality of our environmental crisis, change is urgently needed at all levels of society. The science is clear: our world is warming because of human activity, giving rise to drought, famine, devastating wildfires, extreme weather events, a rise in sea levels and the displacement of millions of people. There is an urgent hunger crisis affecting 13 million people in the Horn of Africa at present, due to a drought fuelled by climate change. On our current trajectory, many parts of our world will be uninhabitable in the decades to come. Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing our world today, and it has grave implications for many aspects of our lives: environmental, social, economic and political. We know that just a hundred fossil fuel companies are responsible for 70% of the carbon emissions which drive this crisis. These corporations care little for future generations. Young people are standing up to such systems, however, calling them to account, engaging in political action and challenging all of us to raise our voices for our common home. The youth climate movement tells us that change is coming whether we like it or not! They, like the manager in today’s parable, are inviting us to ‘holy mischief’.

In Laudato Si’ – On Care for Our Common Home, Pope Francis inspires us by reminding us of our vocation to protect God’s handiwork. He says, “Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.” (LS 217). Pope Francis reminds us that we can all do something to solve the world’s problems, that each of us have a role to play, using our gifts and talents. Pope Francis tells us to never underestimate the power of small actions, those things we do in our daily lives in our homes, schools and parishes to try to live more sustainably, to walk more gently on this earth. These small actions have a ripple affect across a community and can become experiences of grace. They witness to a greater vision for our world.

Let’s start this conversation in this parish / diocese. We [could become/are a Catholic Earthcare Parish]; we can try to achieve the Laudato Si’ Goals; we could join forces with local eco-groups / schools to find out about actions we could take together. Greta Thunberg tells us, “hope is found in action, if you want to find hope, look for action, then the hope will come”. The theme for this year’s Season of Creation is “Listen to the Voice of Creation”. One of the first things we can do is to spend more time in nature, fall in love again with the earth, so that we will be inspired to protect it, giving glory to God, the Creator. St. Francis’ of Assisi, pray for us.

**Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Sunday 25th September 2022**

**Season of Creation 4 – Luke 16:19-31** by Finbarr Keaveney

In today’s Gospel the rich man fails to hear the Cry of the Poor and misses the opportunity to help the poor man Lazarus. On this 4th week of the Season of Creation we remember that the Cry of the Poor and the Cry of the Earth are inextricably linked. In “Laudato Si” Pope Francis tells us: *“the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters”* (LS2).

When we, the rich nations, abuse Mother Earth and her resources it is the poor nations who are disproportionately affected and who suffer the most. Pope Francis has said that “Contemplation is the antidote to misuse of our Common Home.” (September 16, 2020, General Audience). We start here. Take some quiet time to slow down every day to feel, experience and connect with the Awe and Wonder of the Natural World. Paying attention to, and caring for, the plants and wildlife that live around us is a form of prayer, a communion with God through the Earth.

Take a contemplative walk in a forest or by the sea and take in the view with your eyes. Take a dip in the sea or go for a barefoot walk in the sand or the grass and feel the sensations through your body. Sit in your garden or in a park and smell the flowers and listen to the bees hum and the birds sing. Download an App to your smart phone to help you identify the plants that surround you or the species of birds singing in the trees beside you. Listen to the voice of creation.

The poet exclaims:

“Earth’s crammed with heaven,

And every common bush afire with God,

But only he who sees takes off his shoes;”

(Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

This year’s theme for the Season of Creation is “Listen to the Voice of Creation”. Quiet your mind, open your heart and listen to these words from Pope Francis in Laudato Si.

*(Please read slowly and prayerfully the following quotations from Laudato Si. You might invite people to close their eyes, to think of their favourite place in nature.)*

- “St. Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us” (LS1)

- “From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is also a continuing revelation of the divine”. (LS 85) 13

- “The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God” (LS 84).

- “God has written a precious book whose letters are the multitude of things present in the Universe”. (LS 85)

- “To sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God’s love and hope”. (LS 85)

 - “Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see.” (LS 33)

- “What kind of world do we want leave to those who come behind us, to children who now are growing up? (LS 160)

- “The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person’s face”. (LS 233)

 - “there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night” (LS85)

- “If we approach Nature and the environment without this openness to Awe and Wonder, if we no longer speak the language of Fraternity and Beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters” (LS 11)

- “Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.” (LS 92)

- “Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.” (LS 244) “For we know that things can change” (LS 13)

Pope Francis urges us to undergo an Ecological Conversion. That is a “transformation of hearts and minds toward greater love of God, each other, and creation. It is a process of acknowledging our contribution to the social and ecological crisis and acting in ways that nurture communion: healing and renewing our common home.” (Laudato Si’ Movement)

Let us listen out for the Voice of Creation every day and let us play our part in the protection and the restoration of Our Common Home.