

**Recommendations for Sunday Liturgies during
The Season of Creation 2024**



**TO HOPE AND ACT
WITH CREATION**
SEASON OF CREATION 2024

The firstfruits of hope
(Rom 8:19-25)

**Join Christians around the world as we pray and take action to care more
deeply for Our Common Home.**

**These resources are provided by the Laudato Si' Working Group of the Irish
Bishops' Conference.**

**You can find further material on the international website
www.seasonofcreation.org and on the Irish Bishops' Care for Our Common
Home webpage <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/laudato-si/>**

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This year's theme: "To hope and act with Creation"

Creation is groaning (Romans 8:22)

Creation is groaning (Romans 8:22). This biblical image of a whimpering planet is played out daily as the climate and biodiversity crises worsen, affecting the most vulnerable people and unravelling vast ecosystems. The times we live in show that we are not relating to the Earth as a gift from our Creator, but rather as a resource to be used. Saint Francis of Assisi understood this when he referred to the Earth as our sister and our mother in his *Canticle of Creatures*. How can Mother Earth look after us if we do not look after her? Creation is groaning because of the unsustainable actions that harm her. Along with our Sister, Mother Earth, creatures of all kinds, including humans, cry out because of the consequences of our destructive actions causing climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, and human suffering as well as Creation's suffering. And yet, there is hope and the expectation for a better future. To hope in a biblical context does not mean to stand still and quiet, but rather actively striving for new life amidst the struggles.

Creation is standing on tiptoe waiting for the children of God to be revealed (Romans 8:19)

Creation and all of us are called to worship the Creator, working together for a future filled with active hope. Only when we work together with Creation can *the first fruits of hope* be born. St. Paul reminds us that both Creation and humanity are conceived from the beginning in Christ and, therefore, are entrusted to each other. The children of God are those who stretch up their hands towards the Creator, recognising themselves as humble creatures, to praise and respect God, and at the same time to love, respect, care, and learn from God's gift of Creation. Creation is not given to humanity to use and abuse, rather, humanity is created to be part of Creation. More than a common home, Creation is also a cosmic family that calls us to act responsibly. This is how the children of God have an intrinsic vocation and important role to play in the manifestation of the kingdom of justice (cf. Rom 8:19).

This year's symbol: (from: seasonofcreation.org)



First fruits of hope (Rom 8:23-25)

Hope is given to us by God as a protection and guard against futility. Only through hope we may realise the gift of freedom in fullness.

Freedom and responsibility enable us to make the world a better place. Only when we work together with Creation can the first fruits of hope emerge.

A phrase attributed to Saint Augustine says: “Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are.” As we witness the cries and sufferings of Earth and all creatures, let holy anger move us toward the courage to be hopeful and active for justice. We believe that the incarnation of God’s Son offers guidance enabling us to face the troubling world. God is with us in efforts to respond to the challenges of the world we are living in (cf. Rom 8:23).

There are different forms of hope. Hope is not merely optimism. It is not a utopian illusion. It is not waiting for a magical miracle. Hope is trust that our action makes sense, even if the results of this action are not immediately seen (cf. Rom 8:24). Hope doesn’t act alone. Earlier in his letter to the Romans, Paul the apostle explains the close relationship of hope as a growth process: *‘endurance produces character, and character produces hope’* (Rom 5:4). Patience and endurance are close associates of hope. These are qualities that lead to hope.

We know how much bold action to restrain the climate and ecological crises is urgent, and we also know that ecological conversion is a slow process – it takes time for us to change our minds and heart, our ways of living. Sometimes we don’t know what our actions should look like. As we journey in life, every day we get new ideas and inspirations to find a better balance between the urgency and the slow rhythms of long-lasting change. We might not fully comprehend all that is happening, we might not understand the ways of God, but we are called to trust and follow with concrete and sustained actions, following the example of Christ, the redeemer of the whole Cosmos (cf. Rom 8:25).

Some ideas to prepare your Season of Creation Liturgy 2024:

- Parishes may choose **one Sunday** in the Season of Creation (1st September to 4th October) to celebrate the season using these resources. Or you may choose to include the themes throughout the 5 Sundays.
- Technology can enhance the celebration in terms of visual resources. You might consider using our audio-visual resources available on the Season of Creation Page at <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/laudato-si/>
- Pope Francis' message for this year is available at: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/info/2024/02/05/240205a.html>
- Consider how this year's symbol of the First Fruits of Creation might be incorporated into your liturgy. You might have a central space in front of the altar displaying nature motifs and fruits of the harvest.
- Invite children to dress in fruit and vegetable costumes and bring fruits of the earth to bring to the altar at the Entrance Procession, which afterwards could be delivered to a local charity (St Vincent de Paul or Meals on Wheels) or a local food bank.
- Alternatively, or in addition, ask people to bring fruits of the earth to be presented at the Offertory, to be brought to the local food charity.
- You can download the Season of Creation Logo and display it around the church: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1karOL1X4xZtI3ohbBtgQb161TtWmT0b6/view>
- As well as liturgy, our individual actions during the Season of Creation are important. Celebrating creation, taking part in clean-ups, planting trees, and reducing our carbon footprint are some of the immediate actions we can take. Maybe mark this Season outdoors after mass with a tree planting service?
- We ask that the Season is referred to in some way in each Sunday liturgy, for example in the prayers of the faithful, throughout this time.



**SEASON OF
CREATION**

Suggestions for Music:

HARVEST AND NATURE HYMNS:

- For the fruits of all creation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBXHDbesb7k>
- We see the fruitful harvest: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMpM65Ez2hc>
- The Sower's Song (A. Peterson): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IliKIR6mQOE>
- A Harvest of thanksgiving: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JB7R2RokaY>
- A Prayer for the Earth: [A Prayer for the Earth - YouTube](#)
- Look at the World (John Rutter) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxr8QBPq1z0>
- God Has Given us the Earth (Grow in Love hymn) <https://vimeo.com/280567593>
- For the Beauty of the Earth (J. Rutter):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIBkpAm3fhw>
- Shout to the Lord: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gn5CMSSAx_c
- This is Holy Ground (E. Dummer): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fJj21optLM>
- "Holy Ground" (Beatty & Davis, Connection Choir, cover version):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1h9NX9TLmvk>
- Days of Elijah: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca9LnzJnpjQ>

RESPONSORIAL PSALM:

- Psalm 96 - Praise: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mudGglaGngs>
- Psalm 96 – Sing to the Lord: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUkcPxUuC9I>
- St Francis' Canticle: (could be used as a Psalm):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfJ6WJPUff8>
- He Sits Enthroned (Psalm 99) - Sons of Korah:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcqI2Layo1M>
- Psalm 38: All the Ends of the Earth:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4toQu67ohk&list=RD6FDyNx1ceDc&index=2>
- Here I am, Lord:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcXOkht8w7c&list=RD6FDyNx1ceDc&start_radio=1
- How lovely on the mountains (Our God Reigns):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n82_H4yabC4

MEDITATIVE:

- Bountiful harvest: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GB3mcMhY5k>
- Oscail Mo Chroí (Deirdre Ní Chinneide):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kW7niPuhxpY>

FOR CHILDREN:

- The fruits of the Spirit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qG9SbXG9BaY>
 - (or video with actions for children -It can be played at 075x speed if it feels too fast-: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzoWorLiwPI>)
- All Things Bright and Beautiful: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FT_oDqOEGpc
 - (or video with actions for children:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouab_QtNreU)
- Harvest Samba:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTdIrlTIXks&list=PLsSRp90_FcbEkRs3p2eP7AzDvbAvSOpvU
- It's Harvest Time: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-3JPZcljVE>

MASS FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION 2024

Preparation: Sacred Space & Entrance Procession suggestions:

- During opening hymn, children in fruits or vegetable costumes who brought fruits of the earth to the church, are invited to process with them to the altar; these fruits and vegetables afterwards should be delivered to a local charity.
- The theme of “To hope and act with Creation” should be emphasised in the sacred space, alongside the First Fruits symbol or a banner for the Season of Creation.
- Statue of St. Francis (patron of ecology) or a picture of Irish saints such as St. Brigid, St. Kevin; use the Celtic Cross making links with our Celtic Spirituality.
- Tree saplings could be available for planting after the mass / pot plants. See separate Tree Planting resource <https://www.trocaire.org/documents/tree-planting-resource-for-the-season-of-creation/>



Introduction (Priest, Leader of Care for Creation Group or Reader)

Presider: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Response: And with Your Spirit and all of Creation.

I am happy to welcome you to this celebration of the Eucharist during this Season of Creation. The Season of Creation is a time marked throughout the Christian world from 1st September (the World Day of Prayer for Creation) to 4th October (Feast of St. Francis of Assisi) and celebrates the joy of creation as well as encourages awareness-raising initiatives to help us to heal and protect Our Common Home. The theme this year is: **To hope and act with Creation. First fruits of hope (Rom 8:23-25)**



Creation is groaning (Romans 8:22). This biblical image reminds us that we do not treat the Earth as a gift from our Creator, but rather as a resource to be used. And yet, there is hope and the expectation for a better future. Creation and all of us are called to worship the Creator, working together for a better future. Only when we work together with Creation can *the first fruits of hope* be born. In this year’s symbol for the Season of Creation, the children of God are stretching up their hands towards the Creator, recognising themselves as humble creatures, to praise and respect God, and at the same time to love, respect, care, and learn from God’s gift of Creation. Creation is not given to humanity to use and abuse, rather, humanity is created to be part of Creation.

Hope is an instrument given to us by God as a protection and guard. Only when we work together with Creation can the first fruits of hope emerge. God is with us in efforts to respond to the challenges of the world we are living in (cf. Rom 8:23). However, hope is not merely optimism, it is trust that our action makes sense, even if the results of this action are not immediately seen (cf. Rom 8:24); because of this, patience and endurance are close associates of hope.

Sometimes we don't know what our actions should look like, but as we journey in life, we get new ideas and inspirations. We might not fully comprehend all that is happening, we might not understand the ways of God, but we are called to trust and follow with concrete and sustained actions, following the example of Christ, the redeemer of the whole Cosmos (cf. Rom 8:25).

Penitential Rite

O Gracious God, Creator Spirit, Source of life, you have given order, light and life to the world around us, and you have expressed delight in your creation. You commanded us to till and care for the garden of life. And yet, we have trampled on the beauty of your creation and neglected to keep your Word. As we begin Mass today, we seek God's mercy and forgiveness for the times that we have offended against the integrity of God's creation.

And so, O God of Creation:

1. You have created land and trees, animals and all living creatures on the earth. We are destroying the forests through poisons and logging, the voices of the birds, insects and forest dwellers are silenced, Lord have mercy
2. You created a world that produces enough food for all humanity, and yet millions of people go hungry while food wastage is a huge problem in our society, Christ have mercy
3. You created Mother Earth, our common home, who sustains us. Human activities are causing the destruction of her delicate ecosystems as we contaminate the atmosphere with harmful emissions, Lord have mercy

May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our ecological sins, and inspire us to care for our common home, Amen.

Introduction to the Gloria

As we say/sing the Gloria, let us remind ourselves that we are praising and celebrating God as the author of our universe.

Homily Notes for each Sunday of the Season of Creation 2024
(These notes can be adapted as appropriate for your setting)

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – Season of Creation 1
September 1st – Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

By Fr Brian Grogan, SJ

1. The Gospel today is not the best background from which to speak about the liturgical Season of Creation, which begins today, Sept 1st, and runs till Oct 4, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi! It's all about the Pharisees getting lost on rituals around meals and thinking that people become defiled through eating the wrong food. However, to their amazement, Jesus declares that all foods are clean, and this explosive statement underpins the goodness of all creation. Let's explore this theme!

2. Where to start? Let's begin with Breakfast! I presume every one of you had breakfast. I had mine, simple enough as it was (*details*). Breakfast is an obvious way to start a day. An old advert for eggs ran, 'Go to work on an egg!' And some people say: 'I'm an atheist till I've had my first cup of coffee!' In starting the day with some food and drink we're like all animals. Whether they fly, slither, swim, burrow or lumber along, walk with two or four legs, or wait patiently for food to show up, they try to start the day with the nourishment they need.

3. So far so good! But across the world not everything not everyone gets breakfast. Let me illustrate. A recent biography of Pedro Arrupe, a Jesuit who led the Order after Vatican Two and whose cause for beatification is under way, tells of a striking incident in his young life in Madrid. He had joined the Society of St Vincent de Paul and was visiting the slums. He came across a little boy munching on a yam. Let's call this lad 'Juan'.

'What are you eating?' Pedro asked.

'Having breakfast', Juan replies

'But it's four o'clock!'

'I know. But it's the first food I've had today.'

'You haven't had any food all day? Doesn't your father work?'

'We hardly ever have any food. We never eat more than once a day, and my father doesn't work because I don't have one.'

4. That poor boy has plenty of company. The facts about having no breakfast are cruel. Such a lack, due to malnourishment, emaciates small bodies and saps a child's spirit. It stunts their physical and mental growth. In 2021 UN statistics revealed that 'globally, 149.2 million (or 22%) of children under the age of 5 years suffer from stunting' while 14 million under the age of 5 suffer from acute malnutrition or severe wasting. We see the images of

the emaciated children of Gaza on the News every night. More than 40,000 children across the world die of hunger daily.

5. Standing here with my breakfast taken and lunch coming up later, I could feel bad about this and so, I'm, sure could you. But the point is for us ask, 'What can I/we do about it?'

Let's look at our situation here: we are celebrating Mass this Sunday, and that is not irrelevant to the problem we are talking about! The Eucharist is a meal, a divine meal, where we are nourished with the very life of God, because we share at God's table. Now for me, one of the most moving lines in the Gospel comes after the Resurrection, when Jesus organises a lakeside picnic – of bread and fish-- for his exhausted disciples and says simply: 'Come and have Breakfast' (John 21:12). Later he adds: 'Feed my lambs and sheep'.

6. Feeding the needy is on Jesus' mind! It must be on our minds too; else we fail to catch on to what we call the Eucharistic Feast. We are to 'do this in memory of him'. The worldwide hunger for food goes hand in hand with the Eucharist. The social dimension of the Eucharist is of tremendous significance this very day, and always will be. God is generous and plans creation in such a way that all living things can have breakfast. God uses the rainbow to remind us of this: 'When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature on the earth' (Gen 9:16).

7. Let's put this graphically! We will move out of the Church in 20 minutes because 'the Mass is ended'. Suppose we encounter our little friend Juan: we'll recognise him because he's still chewing on his yam. What do we do? What can we do? 'I was hungry' he says, 'and you gave me something to eat!' Let's do what we can, and believe that God will inspire us how best to say to him: 'Come and have breakfast'.

8. That's what the Season of Creation is about: about coming to see our world as it is. It's about expressing our gratitude that there will be breakfast for us tomorrow and about doing what we can to ensure that there will be breakfast also for Juan, for his sisters and brothers and for all animals also. Note that Jesus mentions many animals: doves, eagles, ravens, sparrows; camels and chickens, dogs, donkeys and fish, Foxes, pigs, wolf. (You can think of more in the Carnival of the animals!). He saw his Father as caring for them all, and we must too.

9. Practical hints: In *Laudato Si*, 2015, the pope reminds us that food wasted is taken from the table of the poor, and that every purchase we make has a moral as well as an economic dimension. Keep Juan in mind when you're buying and buy only what you need!

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – Season of Creation 2
September 8th – Mark 7: 31-37 - Jesus heals the deaf man – Ephphatha, (Be open)
By Anna Byrne D.C – Eco-Congregation Ireland & Ephphatha Laudato Si’
(A faith-based group in Down and Conor)

As we enter the second week of the Season of Creation the gospel text invites each of us to explore how to be open as a community, to be open to touch and to be open to change.

Be open to community:

In Laudato Si’ Pope Francis tells us “... the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth are one and the same”. (139) In the gospel story the community notices the plight of the poor man “who had an impediment in his speech” and the people bring him to Jesus for healing. The people were astonished beyond measure at Jesus’ healing power; he makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak. The Season of Creation encourages local communities to become aware of the cry of the earth and to act on its behalf in the same way as this man was cared for by the community. The first fruits of hope are born when we work collectively. “As a unity of skills and a unity of achievement can bring about a different attitude. Social problems can be addressed by community networks...” (LS, 219)

Be open to touch:

Jesus healed the man who was deaf by word and gesture, he touched him and spoke with him – actions full of tenderness and symbolism. He spoke to the man privately as a friend would, thus building trust. He draws him out of isolation and did not make a spectacle of him. Unlike magicians he did not pronounce secret formulae or mutter. By touching the man’s ears and placing spittle on his tongue Jesus expressed his nearness and compassion. Jesus entered into relationship with him. In this encounter with Jesus the deaf man experienced a profound interior conversion.

A similar change of heart is what Pope Francis calls for today in our relationship with creation, without a change from within, there will be no enduring change in our lifestyle after all “to love God we must love what God loves.” Our relationship with others and the world around us needs to be seen through new lens. For too long our consumerist mentality has left us preoccupied with self. We need to move away from our self-centred orientation to a broader understanding of creation. In Mark’s Gospel it was the community who brought the deaf man for healing, “the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ becomes evident in their relationship with the world around them.” (LS, 217)

Be open to taking action:

Jesus speaks to the man with authority. He is firm and direct in his request. He knows what needs to be done to be attentive to the felt need of the community and responds positively to it. For Christian communities today Laudato Si’ offers a blueprint as to what

action needs to be taken to care for creation. Responsibility then rests with us to keep abreast of sound scientific thinking in relation to climate change or extinction of species and act appropriately. There is hope and we can make a difference, “we know that things can change.” (LS, 13).

What action can we take in our local community to show our care for our environment during this season of creation? Perhaps, a first simple step could be to stop and ponder on this beautiful world of ours. Allow the awe and majesty of creation to fascinate us by gazing at flower or tiny creature like small children do. After all “Everything is, as it were, a caress of God.” (LS, 84). As the American poet Maya Angelou is reported to have said: “Our lives are measured not by the number of breaths we take - but by the number of moments that take our breaths away”.

Twenty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – Season of Creation 3

September 15th – Mark 8:27-35

By Fr Dermot Lane

1. Introduction

The Season of Creation is a special time set aside by the churches to stand back and examine how we relate to God's gift of creation. Every human being living on the earth at this time is experiencing the effects of global warming: extreme weather events, the destruction of biodiversity, the interruption of the food chain, toxic gas emissions, the pollution of our oceans and the ongoing damage to human health. No one is exempt from the effects of climate change. Consequently, all are called to hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

The Season of Creation is a unique opportunity for all of us to reflect together on the challenges contained in Pope Francis's encyclical entitled *Laudato Si: on the Care of our Common home* (LS - 2015) and more recently his letter entitled *Laudate Deum: On the Climate Crisis* (LD - 2023). Why two documents on the climate crisis? Francis answers that question at the beginning of his second letter: "Eight years have passed since I published the encyclical... I wanted to share my heartfelt concerns for the care of our creation..." He goes on to say "our responses have not been adequate... The world in which we live is collapsing and may be heading towards a breaking point (LD,2).

Scientists and religious leaders and the United Nations are all agreed that the only thing that will save the planet at this 11th hour is action and not words, deeds and not theories, good works and not faith alone. Emissions are damaging the integrity of the natural world and the well-being of societies. We have the know-how, but do we have the will to act now.

2. A Call to Action

There is a call to action addressed to the early Christians in our second reading from the Letter of St James. James is very clear that faith without good works is dead. Not only does he give primacy to good deeds, but the teaching of Jesus also emphasises the importance of action." Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father (Mt.7:21). Similarly, this emphasis on action is spelt out in Jesus's parable on the judgement of the world at the end of time: "As often as you did it to one of the least of these ... you did it to me" (Mt 25:31-46). Christianity is at its core a practical religion. In the end we will be judged not by theological theories but by what we have done in the service of humanity and the care of our common home.

3. An invitation to Ecological Conversion

Given the gravity of the environmental crisis worldwide, Pope Francis is very clear that what is needed at this time is a deep ecological and spiritual conversion (LS, 216-217). This conversion will involve a change in lifestyle and especially in the way we relate to the natural world. This change of heart will only happen when we realise that we are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it (LS, 139). In other words, we are not extrinsic to the natural world but part of it. Humanity, therefore, has a responsibility to care for nature and to hand on to the next generation a habitable and healthy planet.

The bond between the earth and humanity has been broken. At present, many hold that the earth is currently in an 'intensive-care unit' and that we are running out of time to save it. To sum up, the care of our common home is an essential part of Christian faith (LS, 64).

Twenty Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B - Season of Creation 4
September 22nd 2024 - (Wis 2:12, 17-20, Psalm 53(54), James 3:16-4:3, Mk 9:30-37)

By Laura Madrigal

In this year's message for Season of Creation, the Pope tells us that the protection of creation is an ethical issue, and also a question of faith, as Creation originated as an act of Love by God, and we were created in the image of God: Creation is the point where the mystery of God and the human beings come together. We humans are integral part of the whole of Creation, we're not on top but enfolded by it, depending on it, and it is our duty and mission to keep it the way that God created it. The first commandment we were ever given was "to till" and "to keep" the garden of the Lord (Gen 2:15).

The Lord gives us strength

With today's responsorial Psalm, we can say "the Lord is my help, God upholds my life, and we can ask God, by his power, to uphold our cause. God can give us the strength to stand for Creation and find the way to look after it and protect it.

The wisdom of God which brings harmony

In the second reading, St James tells his disciples about the sources of "disharmony and wicked things of every kind": they proceed from jealousy and ambitions that we cannot satisfy. Can we relate to that in our society? It looks a very relevant reading: we see disharmony and evil everywhere: we see so many wars in our world, we see divisions in our church, and we see polarisation of attitudes in our society; we see the destruction of our environment, many times led by the search for profit. In contrast, the wisdom that comes from God brings peace, "is kindly and considerate, is full of compassion and shows itself by doing good", says the apostle James.

Many immigrants, made in the image of God the same as we all are, are forced to leave their countries for climate reasons. They have to leave because the green-house gas emissions to the atmosphere we emit in our countries, mostly from extracting and burning fossil fuels like petrol, gas, coal and turf, have damaged the climate of their countries so much that draughts and violent storms have made their lives too difficult.

Welcoming children and the little ones

In today's passage of the gospel of Mark, Jesus tells his disciples that, by welcoming little children they are welcoming him, and by welcoming him they welcome God the Father. What is so special about little children? They are small, frail... in times of Jesus they were considered of much lower importance than adults. Children have an attitude of amazement, of wonder, of acceptance of all; children have a big sense of justice and fairness.

This passage follows Jesus telling his disciples that, whoever wants to be the first or more powerful needs to be last and at the service of the others: this goes against the values

of our world, doesn't it? Jesus is challenging us, he's asking to welcome those who are small, frail, unimportant, and to welcome them as if we are welcoming him, as if we are welcoming God himself. In our lives, in our society, aren't these the people that are homeless, the immigrants and refugees who've escaped war, hunger, climate disaster... and who've lost it all fleeing their countries?

Listening to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor

In this Season of Creation, in which we try to become more aware of the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor:

- let's work on creating the right attitudes in our lives,
- let's become aware which divisions am I part of and try to heal them
- let's try to look at life with the clear look of a child, let's wonder at Nature, let's think of every person in this planet -independently of race, colour, sexual orientation, religion or politics- with the infinite dignity of having been created in the image of God
- let's think how we can contribute to help heal the damage created in this world and how we can help those in countries suffering most from climate change, not out of pity nor even compassion, but out of justice.

In this season of Creation, let's look at the environment as Our Common Home, as Pope Francis calls it, the common home of all human beings and all living creatures. Let's dare to dream and hope that our love for Nature, for all living plants, animals and human beings can unite us all, bring us together healing fears and divisions.

Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B– Season of Creation 5

29th September 2023 – Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

By Sylvia Thompson

Jesus continually tries to help us understand what his Father is like, and in that way to tell us about what He is like and what we are called to be like. We can see that God the Father and Jesus are merciful, inclusive; they welcome the small gestures, like a cup of water given to someone who is thirsty. We see that they are always concerned for the underdog, always welcoming and especially of those who are different. What does this mean for us, who are Jesus' followers, who call ourselves Christian?

Maybe at times we have our blinkers on, and we say like the apostles: "they're not our type", "they're a different denomination or faith", "they don't go to our church", "they don't go to any church!", whereas, in this reading, we hear Jesus saying "the one who is not against me is for me", that's chastening for us, isn't it!?

We know that many people in our world and local community are giving those drinks of water. They might do so via 'Meals on Wheels', or volunteering in various groups, knitting blankets for others, visiting a neighbour in hospital, caring for somebody at home, doing some shopping for somebody, sharing gifts and resources...all little gestures of kindness. They never go unnoticed, and so, this Season of Creation, as we listen to the theme 'to act and hope with creation'... how are we to do that?

We do it by first listening in prayer, we do it in action, but above all we do it with hope in our hearts. Our hope springs from our Christian hope, our Easter hope, triumph of life over death, light over darkness, and as we listen to the call of Pope Francis, and now to the Bishops of Ireland to set aside 'havens for pollinators in our parish grounds, for biodiversity', can we act with Creation in small or big ways? Maybe, it might simply be to spend time in nature, to give thanks for it, to avoid harming it. Maybe... can we welcome others -who may know more than we do- to help us take action in our parish grounds, maybe from another parish or a community group, to help us see what steps we can take in our parish? It brings to mind some of the words of Pope Francis in his letter or encyclical, to each one of us *Laudato Si'* (which means 'praised be') that "the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor"; in his prayer at the end of that amazing document, Pope Francis prayed "teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey toward your infinite light".

So let each of us offer our little cup of water into this great enterprise, maybe by giving some of our time or our knowledge about biodiversity. We heard Jesus' harsh words for those who placed obstacles, let us not be one of those with attitudes of ignorance, apathy or cynicism, but rather offer our little glass of water in hope.

Short silence after the homily

Introduction to the Creed

As we stand to recite the Creed, notice that we are speaking to God who is the 'Creator of heaven and earth'.

Suggestions for Prayers of the Faithful

(Gathered and adapted by Anna Byrne DC, Eco-Congregation Ireland)

1. Powerless in death, you rose in the power of God's love; teach us the wisdom and necessity of nonviolence for the salvation of our planet. Lord, hear us.
2. Dear Lord, through your love for the earth and all its fruits; help us to redeem the harm we have done to this planet. Lord, hear us.
3. Lord, you wept for a people who had not known you; through your resurrection, help us to recognise you in one another, in all creation and in all ways that you come to us. Lord, hear us.
4. God, you have hidden yourself in every blade of grass and every towering mountain; - give us eyes to see your creative love at work in our world. Lord, hear us.
5. Through your love for the earth and all of its fruits; help us to redeem the harm we have done to this planet. Lord, hear us.
6. God, you have created all things, and all you have created is good; help us to see others and all things as you see them. Lord, hear us.
7. Jesus, your death has freed all creation from endless death: make us liberators of earth's ecosystems. Lord, hear us.
8. Christ in taking flesh among us you raised all creation to a new dignity; -teach us to have an ever-growing reverence for the work of your hands and a sense of responsibility for the work of your hands and a sense of responsibility for its preservation. Lord, hear us.

Offertory Procession

- A loaf of bread and bowl of grapes could be brought to the altar.
- Indicate that we have bread and wine to offer only because of the work of our endangered pollinators; bread and wine are gifts from the Earth, gifts from God.
- If they were not brought up at the beginning of the liturgy, people could bring up to the altar fruits of the earth (having been asked to do so the previous two Sundays at mass), to be distributed to a local charity

Our Father

As we pray this prayer over the coming weeks, let us ask forgiveness for our sins against Creation and the poor. Let us be reminded of our deep interconnectedness with all that exists and that at the centre of the Lord's prayer we say: **thy will be done on earth** as it is in heaven.

Before Communion

The celebrant could read aloud the prayer usually said quietly by the priest:
'Lord Jesus Christ, may our receiving of you ... be for us protection in mind and body, and a healing remedy'.

Post-communion Reflections *Please see Appendix for further examples.*

From Pope Francis' message for Season of Creation 2024:

Our Christian optimism is founded on a living hope: it realizes that everything is ordered to the glory of God, to final consummation in his peace and to bodily resurrection in righteousness, as we pass "from glory to glory." Nonetheless, in the passage of time we are not exempt from pain and suffering: the whole creation groans (cf. Rom 8:19-22), we Christians groan (cf. vv. 23-25) and the Spirit himself groans (cf. vv. 26-27). This groaning expresses apprehension and suffering, together with longing and desire. It gives voice to our trust in God and our reliance on his loving yet demanding presence in our midst, as we look forward to the fulfilment of his plan, which is joy, love and peace in the Holy Spirit.

Prayer for the Season of Creation 2024

Let us pray: God of all creation,
Your spirit dances throughout the earth.
You give drink to the trees, shade for the birds,
bread for the hungry, you bring life and make all things holy.
Flood us with your grace,
so we may sow seeds of love, justice and beauty,
and reflect your kingdom here on earth.

From Pope Francis, Laudato Si', 236:

The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, "creation is projected towards divinisation, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself". Thus, the Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation.

From Pope Francis, Laudato Si', 237:

On Sunday, our participation in the Eucharist has special importance. Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world. Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, the "first day" of the new

creation, whose first fruits are the Lord's risen humanity. It also proclaims "man's eternal rest in God". In this way, Christian spirituality incorporates the value of relaxation and festivity. Rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others. And so, the day of rest, centred on the Eucharist, sheds its light on the whole week, and motivates us to greater concern for nature and the poor.

Final Blessing

- Indicate theme of next Sunday's Mass
- We are encouraging parishes to return 30% of church grounds to nature as part of the Irish Bishops Return to Nature initiative – can your parish consider making a start on this during the year? Maybe the Season of Creation is the perfect time to look for a group to get started. A step-by-step guide is now available here:
<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/laudato-si/returning-to-nature/>
- The Final Blessing to include all aspects of creation, including what is around the Altar and outside the Church.

Presider: The Lord be with you,

Response: And with Your Spirit and with all of Creation.

The Mass is ended. Go in Peace to listen to the voice of creation and care more deeply for our common home.

As Congregation Exits

- Small gift of seeds, bulbs, prayer card, booklet, photo, given out by children in costumes
- Planting of a native Irish Tree on church grounds to mark the Season of Creation 2024. Involve local groups and local media.

APPENDIX – MORE POST COMMUNION REFLECTIONS

From Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 236:

'The Lord, in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. He comes not from above, but from within, he comes that we might find him in this world of ours. In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God.'

The Eucharist and Creation – Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* 236

'The Eucharist is an act of cosmic love: yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world. The Eucharist joins heaven and earth: it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration. In the bread of the Eucharist creation is projected towards divinisation, towards unification with the Creator himself.'

A Prayer for our Earth (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 246):

All powerful God,
you are present in the universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with your peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty,
not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle,
for justice, love and peace.

A Christian prayer in union with creation (from Laudato Si', 246):

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.
Praise be to you!
Son of God, Jesus,
through you all things were made.
You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,
you became part of this earth,
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.
Today you are alive in every creature
in your risen glory.
Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light
you guide this world towards the Father's love
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.
You also dwell in our hearts
and you inspire us to do what is good.
Praise be to you!

Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,
teach us to contemplate you
in the beauty of the universe,
for all things speak of you.
Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined
to everything that is.
God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!
Amen.

The Dance of Creation: Brian Grogan SJ, *Creation Walk 90-91*

We may imagine heaven, not as an endless choir practice on a wet Sunday afternoon, but as the unrestricted and all-inclusive joy of dancing in a transfigured universe. Even an initial awareness of the infinite imagination and power of God who plays in creation shows that ours is already a dancing universe.

We are part of the unfathomable weave of the universe, immersed in its deep mystery. Its dance has already begun: it has always been in process. Each of us has a role in it. Jesus and his Father are working (John 4:34) for the good of all creation and we can tune in to their signals and do likewise. Thomas Merton says that every moment and every event in every person's life, plants seeds of spiritual vitality in their hearts. This is the divine at work on Earth: this is grace, and grace is everywhere. All is sacred, and so are we. We must not desecrate our Common Home. We belong to the great Creation Story, to a whole that is infinitely greater than ourselves. We are called even now to share with all of creation 'in the freedom of the children of God' (Romans 8:21). So, let's put on our dancing shoes and learn the steps of the cosmic dance!

A prayer for the Earth (Martyn Goss, Diocese of Exeter)

God our Creator, maker and shaper of all that is, seen and unseen;
You are present in the breadth and depth of the whole of creation,
and in the processes that make life possible.
Yet, we are distracted by the gods of the marketplace.
Our lives have become fractured and fragmented.
In our brokenness we disturb
the Earth's capacity to hold us,
Call us back from the brink.
Help us to choose love and not fear,
to change ourselves and not the planet,
to act justly for the sake of the vulnerable,
and to make a difference today for the life tomorrow.
We make this our prayer in your name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Amen.

When I am Among the Trees – a poem by Mary Oliver

When I am Among the Trees,
especially the Willows and the Honey Locust,
equally the Beech, the Oaks and the Pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they Save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have Goodness and Discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk Slowly, and Bow often.

Around me the Trees stir in their leaves
and call out, “Stay awhile.”
The Light flows from their branches.

And they call again, “It’s simple,” they say,
“and you too have come into the world to do this, to Go Easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine.”



From: The Church of England Environment Program:

God of Creation and Lord of Life (Margaret Pickford 2018 Women’s World Day of Prayer)

God of creation and Lord of life, you entrusted us to care for our environment, but in many parts of the world we have failed. Help us to realise how fragile and unstable our surroundings are, because we are not looking after creation. We need to be true stewards and to understand how the most insignificant little flowers, and the tiniest insects, each creature and individual people are all part of a wondrous whole. Amen

Tearfund “Hope for Creation” prayer

Lord, make us people who recognise, nurture and act towards a more sustainable world for the benefit of all who draw life from this planet. Raise up campaigners who will speak out for wisdom, restraint and compassion. And teach us to partner you in protecting this precious world and the lives of our most vulnerable global neighbours. Amen

Bless our Lament (John Polhill)

Creator God,
Bless the tear we shed for the resources we have squandered.
Bless the sigh we breathe out for the atmosphere.
Bless the head we hang for the creatures lost and exploited.
Bless the hands we wring for the things we have broken and wasted.
Bless us as we lament.
Cradle us as we regret. Restore us as we start afresh. Amen

Poem of Lament (Excerpt from "Hieroglyphic Stairway" by Drew Dillinger)

"It's 3:23 in the morning
and I'm awake
because my great great grandchildren
won't let me sleep.
my great great grandchildren
ask me in dreams
what did you do while the Planet was plundered?
what did you do when the Earth was unravelling?
surely you did something
when the seasons started failing?
as the mammals, reptiles, birds were all dying?
did you fill the streets with protest
when democracy was stolen?
what did you do
once
you
knew?"

Confession (www.operationnoah.org/day_of_prayer)

When we are unkind to people,
and forget they are God's children,
When we are careless with the beasts,
and forget they are God's creation,
When we ill-treat the land,
and forget the splendour of God,
Forgive us, O God of love,
and reconcile us to yourself,
to one another and to the Creation.
Teach us that the earth and all its fullness is yours,
the world and all who dwell in it.
Remind us that your Son too enjoyed the fruits of the harvest in Galilee and joins
us now as we celebrate your good gifts together.
Call us again to safeguard the gift of life, now and forever. Amen
Forgive us Lord for our thoughtless wasting
For heat blasting in open doorways

for lights burning in empty rooms
for homes basking in T-shirt warmth

forgive our thoughtless wasting.
For leaving windows draughty,
for lagging left undone,
for lofts un-insulated
forgive our thoughtless wasting.
For cars that guzzle petrol
for driving little journeys
for cheaper fares on planes
forgive our thoughtless wasting.
God grant us clear thinking, right action, and a gentle lifestyle.

An Old Irish Blessing

An Old Irish Blessing
May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sunshine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
may God hold you in the
palm of His hand.

“Praying” by Mary Oliver

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch
a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but a doorway
into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

“The Road Not Taken”, by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,

And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.