

## 2018 27<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY

From September 1<sup>st</sup> until October 4<sup>th</sup> Christians around the world have been united in praying for Creation. We call this time the 'Season of Creation'.

In pagan Rome, Creation was often symbolised by a cornucopia alongside a libation bowl. The cornucopia was a large container shaped like a goat's horn filled with beautiful flowers, luscious fruit and succulent corn. It was a symbol of the plenty gifted to humanity by the gods.

Balancing that was a libation bowl- a bowl filled with delicate wines. The libation bowl was used to pour the wine over an altar- a symbolic gifting to the gods of the very best of creation by way of thanksgiving.

The two symbols are a stark representation that while humanity receives abundantly from the gods, it must in turn give appropriate thanks by nurturing Creation and replenishing it.

Christianity had no problem in embracing these symbols. However in stain glass windows in Cathedrals and Churches where they are used, a third emblem is frequently added- that of a snake.

In the snake we see echoed the Adam and Eve Story which was a part of our 1<sup>st</sup> Reading this evening. The snake reminds us of the original lie about Creation that Satan spoke to Adam and Eve: "Take the fruit. Consume it. You surely shall not die when you do so but you will become like God."

Modern man has fallen for that lie- seeing the Earth as an endless cornucopia; grabbing greedily the fruits of the Earth- with no acknowledgement of the need to moderate what is taken and to replace it for future generations. The thought of libation- of giving back to Creation- has no place in the global economy.

In the Adam and Eve Story, God gave Adam and Eve the power to name the animals, the birds, the plants and the trees. They were thereby given authority over the works of God's Creation. But Adam and Eve were not given ownership of Creation; rather they were given the task of being stewards.

As stewards, then, we may use the Creation for food and shelter but we also have a responsibility to nurture Creation and to protect it. We are to live in harmony with Creation- for we ourselves are parts of God's Creation. If Creation is diminished, we will be diminished.

As a poignant example: here in New Zealand we rejoice in our forests and bush. Soaring above all other trees- the king of our forests- is the regal kauri. Yet we hear that in many forests, our kauris are dying. If we lose our kauris, we as a nation will be diminished. Something precious, something beautiful, a true taonga will be gone. As stewards of this wonderful creation, we have a duty to do all that is necessary to save it and help it to regenerate.

Three years ago Tess, a dear parishioner, gave me a little booklet of Morning Prayers. I love these prayers and say them every morning. The one for Wednesdays goes like this: “Abba Father, I look to you this day with joy in my heart and praise on my lips. I want to celebrate this gift of life. May I never forget what a blessing it is to experience the wonder of Your Creation.”

I repeat: “May I never forget what a *blessing* it is to experience the wonder of Your Creation.”

Last Wednesday as I said this prayer, I recalled how on the previous evening I had been sitting on the bench outside Audrey’s Office in the cool of the evening, waiting for people to arrive for the RCIA class. To the left, was the cherry tree resplendent in pink blossoms. In front of me, the flower garden bursting with rich colours, and to the front the evergreen olive trees were gently waving to me. The beauty with which I was surrounded lifted my heart to God and I said a heart-felt, “Thank-you, Abba, Father.”

And then the thought came to me that there were others to whom I should also have given thanks. There were the parishioners who planted those trees and flowers many years ago. There are the parishioners who keep the flower garden free of weeds, mow the lawns and trim the trees. A couple of weeks ago a group of volunteers had swept the whole area clean of winter debris. Yes they should be thanked too; for they have been co-creators with God of this beautiful area.

Pope Francis said as the Season of Creation began: “This Season of Creation gives us a fitting opportunity to reaffirm our personal vocation to be stewards of creation, to thank God for the wonderful handiwork He has entrusted to our care and to implore His help for the protection of creation.” He also exhorted us to “beg pardon for the sins committed against the world in which we live.”

Three months ago I bought this claw thing for \$5 at the Warehouse. It is a brilliant little machine enabling me to pick up rubbish without bending my

back too much. Two or three times a week I wander around our large property with this tiny machine picking up any rubbish which has been dropped or has been blown here.

At least four people have said to me: "You shouldn't be doing that." Which leaves me confused. Because of course I should be. I live on this Earth and like everybody else I have a responsibility to cleanse the world of plastic bags, scraps of paper, bits of rope and general rubbish. Nobody is exempt; we are all stewards of the Earth. All of us are diminished if our earth is polluted, if our seas are poisonous, if our air is filthy. All of us have a responsibility to keep our Earth beautiful, fertile and productive.

Always remember the symbol of the cornucopia- the horn filled with gorgeous foods- reminding us to stand in awe at the lavishness with which God has created.

Remember, too, the symbol of the libation bowl- reminding us of our duty to tend the earth with loving care; reminding us to return God thanks by planting and weeding, pruning and nurturing our lovely earth.

We must ignore the blandishments of the snake who exhorts us to be selfish and to grab the fruits of the earth and ocean for ourselves alone, to share nothing and to return nothing.

We are brothers and sisters. Everything is to be shared; no one should go hungry.

And when it is time for us to be embraced by Mother Earth, may this same Earth do so with great love because she knows that has been enhanced by our presence here.