

## 2020 25<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY

The theme for this year's Season of Creation is 'Jubilee' because it is now 50 years since the Environmental Movement had its birth.

More and more people right across the world are coming to accept that we are at a real tipping point as far as our environment is concerned and that action is urgently needed if we are to hand on to future generations a liveable Earth. In North America we hear of huge forest fires on the West Coast and terrible Hurricanes on the East Coast. In South America we learn that the vast forests of the Amazon, which enable our Earth to breathe, are being ravaged. In Africa millions of starving people are migrating because their once fertile lands are bereft of water and have become life-less desert. Even in our own country so many of our streams and rivers are brown and polluted. The Notices at Rere Falls warning us that the water of the river contains contaminants and shouldn't be swum in, are ever-so sad.

Yes- there is a crisis. I think we are well aware of it and I'm sure all of us, in our own ways, are trying to respond with sensitivity. Most of us, I'm sure, place the plastics, tins and paper we have used into receptacles where they can be recycled. Most of us use paper bags, not plastic bags when we do our shopping. We do our best- as little as it may seem- to protect our beautiful planet.

We do this because we know that our planet has been given to us as a Gift by our loving Creator- God and that it is our duty to use it with gratitude, to enhance it, and to pass it for future generations to use and enjoy.

One thing we should all do is to stop from time to time and to simply gaze upon God's Creation.

One beautiful Spring morning during my days of teaching at Sacred Heart College I took my class of Year 9 boys outside and had them gaze quietly at the tall Oak tree growing just outside their classroom. After 10 minutes or so, I then instructed them to respond to what they were feeling with a poem or a prayer. There was a profound silence as they did that.

Twenty years or so after that day I met one of those boys at an Old Boys Reunion. He told me that he had never forgotten that warm Spring day when he had gazed with awe and gratitude upon the Oak tree. It had opened his

heart up to the wonder of Creation and had begun a habit in him of stopping to gaze on the beauty of Creation and giving God praise.

Each Sunday in the Morning Prayer of the Church the Canticle of Daniel is prayed. I love it. In part it goes like this: *You, clouds of the sky, o bless the Lord and you, sun and moon, o bless the Lord and you, the stars of the heavens, o bless the Lord and you showers and rain - O bless the Lord. To Him be highest glory and praise forever. And you, rivers and seas o bless the Lord and you creatures of the sea o bless the Lord and you every bird in the sky o bless the Lord, and you wild beasts and tame, O bless the Lord. To Him be highest glory and praise forever. And you, all people of the world, O bless the Lord. To Him be highest glory and praise forever.*

Our thanks to the Creator of our World doesn't have to be formal. During these Spring days, I like to open my ranch slider and go out onto my balcony. I breathe in God's fresh air and then gaze at the life all around me- the trees, the birds, the grass, the clouds, the sun. All are gifts. All are wondrous. To God be highest glory and praise.

The theme of today's Gospel is the enormous generosity of God, symbolised by the Vineyard owner, who gives a denarius to every worker whether they worked all day or not. A denarius is a living wage for a day. The workers who had laboured all day grumbled, expecting those who had only worked a few hours to get less pay. But they were selfish. They were ignoring the genuine needs of their fellow workers who needed a denarius if their family was to eat a good meal that night.

God has been ever-so generous in the lavishness of Creation. Justice demands that the fruits of God's Creation be shared so that every person, every day, receives a denarius- that is money enough to live with dignity.

We pray that those in power in our World will hear the cry of the poor and dedicate the vast resources they control to ensuring that every person- in every country- will be given their denarius.

In a Letter to all Catholics sent last Friday our New Zealand Bishops say, "As Bishops it is not our role to tell you who to vote for. Rather it is our role to guide people to look to the wellbeing of everyone in our political decision making- especially the most vulnerable- as well as the wellbeing of our planet. Rather than thinking about what will benefit each of us personally regarding the election and the referendum choices we face, we ask you to pray and

discern what will protect the poor and the vulnerable and what will uphold the dignity of creation so that we create a connected future for all, without discarding any of us.”

Clearly the priorities that our Bishops have is that we should all have huge hearts for the well-being of the weak and vulnerable within our society and that we should all have a special care for the protection of our Earth.

Let us take these thoughts seriously.