

# The Season of Creation - 2020



## What is the Season of Creation?



The Season of Creation is an annual celebration of prayer and action to protect creation. It was originally begun as a day of prayer for the Orthodox Church on 1st September in 1989, by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I. In the years following, the World Council of Churches extended the celebration to over a month, the Catholic Church officially joining under the leadership of Pope Francis in 2015.

Now over 2 million Christians celebrate this Season annually from 1st September to 4th October, the feast of St Francis, the patron of ecology.

The theme for this year 2020 is Jubilee for the Earth.

Many resources for this celebration are provided on the Season of Creation website. However having read some years ago that John Zizioulas, a Greek Orthodox theologian, believes that the link of the celebration of the Eucharist with care for our earth is essential in bringing about change by humans in relation to care for the earth I wanted to try to find other statements that would support this and so I offer these extracts for anyone interested, to reflect on during the 5 weeks of the Season of Creation.



## SEASON OF CREATION – WEEK ONE (1- 7 September)

### Pope Francis - Laudato Si'

Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Indeed the Eucharist is itself 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.

### Denis Edwards – Ecology at the Heart of Faith

When humans come to the Eucharist they bring the fruits of creation and, in some way, the whole of creation to the Eucharistic table. In the Eucharist, creation is lifted up to God in offering and thanksgiving. The gifts of creation are lifted up to God and the Spirit is invoked to transform the gifts of creation and the assembled community into the body of Christ. The exercise of this priesthood is not confined to the ordained but is the God-given role of all the faithful.

### Brendan Lovett – It's not over yet

The Eucharist is the great sacrifice of praise by which the Church speaks on behalf of the whole creation. For the world which God has reconciled is present at every Eucharist: in the bread and wine, in the persons of the faithful, and in the prayers they offer for themselves and for all the people .... The Eucharist thus signifies what the world is to become: an offering and hymn of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit.

### Noel Davis – The Heart Waking

#### *The Beatitudes of Creation (2)*

Blessed are you sure foot of donkey for your self-assurance and dignity

Blessed are you goat for having a mind of your own

Blessed are you stray of the flock for the joy of being carried home

Blessed are you graceful snake for the bearing of blame of our betrayal and fear

Blessed are you vine for thee wine that gladdens our hearts

Blessed are you field of grain for the bread we break together and share

Blessed are we all, daughters and sons of wondrous Land

for Land's resolve is to nurture and care for each of us and to rejoice in our blooming.

#### For reflection

You have probably experienced celebrating Mass in a variety of contexts, and celebrating in each context probably was different – what might have been some of those moments for you?

You may like to write your own Beatitudes of Creation



## SEASON OF CREATION – WEEK TWO (8 – 14 September)

### Society of the Sacred Heart - Constitutions – par 37

The Eucharistic presence in our communities is a constant reminder that Christ is the centre of our life, inviting us to adore Him individually and in community.

Through the Eucharist we are committed to live united among ourselves, to build communion in a divided and unjust world, and to give ourselves wholeheartedly to others.

### Patricia Fox RSM – God as Communion

(John Zizioulas) argues that it is the liturgy that provides the basis for a positive approach to the world and creation. Within the liturgy the faithful offer the gifts of creation – bread and wine – to God as Eucharist (thanksgiving), and this represents, he claims, a journey of cosmic dimensions .... (he) claims that within a Eucharistic vision of the world, the dichotomy between time and eternity ceases to exist and that the unity of the past, the present, and the future enables a complete acceptance of the sanctification of time and of history.

He believes that the liturgy is the key formative source of initiation into a way of being that can shape and transform humanity's relationships and behaviour toward every other identity. My (i.e. Patricia Fox's) reading of his work is that this is the sense in which he holds that a redeemed humanity has a key role in the "salvation" of creation.

### Denis Edwards – Partaking of God

In every Eucharist we form a community of creation united in praising God. When the Christian community brings gifts of bread and wine to the altar, it symbolically brings with these gifts the whole of creation. The great prayer over the gifts is a prayer of thanksgiving for God's act of creation as well as for God's saving action in Christ. It is an act of praise of God from the whole community of creation. These themes are explicit in several of the Catholic Eucharistic prayers. Immediately after the Sanctus, in the Eucharistic Prayer III (often used in parishes on Sundays), the gathered community formally praises God in union with all other creatures: "You are indeed Holy, O Lord, and all you have created rightly gives you praise". In the Preface of Eucharistic Prayer IV we find: "With them we, too, confess your name in exultation, giving voice to every creature under heaven". The gathered community gives vocal praise in union with all of God's creatures, with flowers, trees, parrots and kangaroos, who constantly give God praise by being what they are. To think of a great Sequoia tree or a laughing kookaburra or a dolphin riding the surf as praising God is to enter a biblical way of thought in which we see ourselves as fellow creatures with others in the one communion of creation, all of which is to be transformed in Christ (Rom. 18-25).

### Prayer – 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time (Sunday Missal 1982)

God our Father, open our eyes to see your hand at work in the splendour of creation, in the beauty of human life.

Touched by your hand our world is holy. Help us to cherish the gifts that surround us, to share your blessings with our brothers and sisters, and to experience the joy of life in your presence.

#### For reflection

When you attend Mass notice how often creation and earth and other words relating to creation are used. This will vary according to the choices of Preface, Eucharistic prayer (canon), psalms, hymns and other parts of the Mass.



## **SEASON OF CREATION – WEEK THREE (15 - 21 September)**

### **Society of the Sacred Heart - Constitutions par. 5**

Through the Eucharist we enter into the mystery of the open side of Jesus. In our daily life the Eucharist celebrates His death and resurrection, the reality which lies at the heart of the sufferings and hopes of the human family.

Through the Eucharist we are drawn into the gift of Jesus to His Father for the life of the world, and in His Body we are gathered into one.

### **Denis Edwards – Ecology at the Heart of Faith**

We remember the vulnerable state of the community of life on earth today and bring this to God. ... this is caught up in the mystery of Christ celebrated in each of our Eucharists.

The One we encounter sacramentally in the Eucharist is the One in whom all things were created and in whom all will be transfigured.

### **Tony Kelly – The Bread of God**

In the Eucharist these elements (symbols, gestures, words, relationships, and biological processes of our world) reach their most intense and comprehensive. There the risen Lord takes fragments of creation – the elements of our earthly reality that nature and history have combined to produce – to transform them into something more in anticipation of a new totality: “This is my body; this is my blood”.

### **Bread of Tomorrow – ed. Jane Morley**

*Prayer* – God of creation, the earth is yours  
with all its beauty and goodness,  
its rich and overflowing provision.  
But we have claimed it for our own,  
plundered its beauty for profit,  
grabbed its resources for ourselves.  
God of creation, forgive us.  
May we no longer abuse your trust,  
but care gently and with justice for your earth. Amen (Jan Berry)

#### **For reflection**

Referring to extracts from the Constitutions what might be some of the sufferings that are related to human impacts on our natural environment?

Reflect on our own impact on our earth in our daily living.



## SEASON OF CREATION – WEEK FOUR (22 - 28 September)

### Tony Kelly – The Bread of God

Obviously influenced by Eucharistic ecological symbolism a noted ecologist writes:

*To live, we must daily break the body and shed the blood of creation. When we do this knowingly, lovingly, skilfully, reverently it is a sacrament. When we do it ignorantly, greedily, clumsily, and destructively, it is a desecration. In such a desecration, we condemn ourselves to spiritual, moral loneliness, and others to want.* (Wendell Berry)

Although we have no intention of reducing the Eucharistic celebration of the mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection to ecological concerns, still the Eucharist does affect such concerns. It sustains the vision and the hope necessary to address the urgent problems confronting the human race at the beginning of this new millennium. A conscience formed by the Eucharist works against the powerful cultural tendencies to desecrate God's good creation.

### Society of the Sacred Heart - Chapter 1970

To contemplate his Heart we have no need to turn away from this earth, the home of God made Man. Christ is present, hidden in the heart of the world. Earth could not hold him in death; he lives and the whole world of time and space is transfigured through his risen life. He is present in the unconscious waiting of creation in travail; he is at work in the efforts of (humanity) to build a world of justice and brotherly (and sisterly) love. It is in this very humanity whose fear and loneliness and love he shared that his GLORY must shine forth.

### Pope John Paul - Ecclesia de Eucharistia

I have been able to celebrate Holy Mass in chapels built along mountain paths, on lake shores and seacoasts; I have celebrated it on altars built in stadiums and in city squares ... this varied scenario of celebrations has given me a powerful experience of its universal and, so to speak, cosmic character. 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 Son of God became man in order to restore all creation, in one supreme act of praise, to the One who made it out of nothing. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation.

### Denis Edwards – Ecology at the Heart of Faith

In every Eucharist we begin by bringing creation to the table, bread and wine, 'fruit of the earth and the work of human hands. Our everyday Eucharistic prayers bring out the inner relationship between God's action in creation and redemption: 'He is the Word through whom you made the universe, the Saviour you sent to redeem us'. 2<sup>nd</sup> E. prayer

The One we encounter sacramentally in the Eucharist is the One in whom all things were created and in whom all will be transfigured.

### Society of the Sacred Heart - General Chapter 1994

The beauty of our earth, the ecological crisis, the dignity and weight of human work call us to live Eucharist as a place of unifying and renewal of all creation.

Bread and wine transformed into the body and blood of Christ send us to our endangered earth to care for it and to make it liveable for all people without exception.

### Society of the Sacred Heart -General Chapter 2008

In the Eucharist we celebrate the fidelity of God and experience communion with all of creation.

#### For Reflection

Reflect on the processes that are involved in providing the bread and wine of the Eucharist.



## **SEASON OF CREATION – WEEK FIVE (29 - 4 October)**

### **Choices for week 5**

**Pope John Paul II** wrote an encyclical entitled **Ecclesia de Eucharistia** in 2003. In it he wrote “When I think of the Eucharist ..... I recall the many times and places in which I was able to celebrate it ... the varied scenarios has given me a powerful experience of the universal and, so to speak, cosmic character. 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. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation.

If you have access to **Hymn of the Universe** by **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin** you may like to pray **The Mass on the World**

Alternatively you may like to reflect on the writing of **Daniel O’Leary** in **An Astonishing Secret**.

### **Daniel O’Leary – An Astonishing Secret**

(Karl Rahner says) “that if we cannot see and experience God in the ordinary events of life, we cannot expect to see and experience God when we gather for sacramental worship. For example, before the Sunday Eucharist can be a celebration of spiritual and joyful healing and empowerment, every human encounter with nature, with others, must be felt as a loving encounter with God”.

(Michael Skelley – The Liturgy of the World: Karl Rahner’s Theology of Worship)

The first step towards a deeper understanding of sacraments is to see them in the context of a world already permeated and filled with God’s presence. Grace is oriented to our humanity in its fullness. The ‘holy’ life can be lived only in the context of everyone’s everyday existence.

The Eucharist ‘in a fragment of matter’ penetrates, gathers up and embraces all Creation. Human, non-human and all created entities form a single spiritual community, each worshipping God in its own way.

In the form of Bread and Wine, humanity offers back to God what is God’s own, and time and space are sanctified. Beyond a very individualistic explanation of ‘going to Mass’ and mostly irrelevant arguments about the rubrics of it, Pope Francis and his two predecessors ask us to open our minds to a magnificently richer understanding of what our Sunday celebration means. It is a holy communion of heaven and earth, a moment of true vision of the divinity of our human lives, a time for the whole universe to sing a song of thanks to its Creator, an experience of the abundant and eternal horizon – all somehow focussed on a piece of bread. The Kingdom that is to come, the Omega we strive for is already around us. This Earth, the whole universe in the light of the Incarnation, is a kind of theophany of God’s Real Presence. We are living now in that astonishing milieu where we perceive every sensation of every sense as the touch and whisper of God!