

HOMILY – DAY OF PRAYER FOR CARE OF CREATION

Although we are currently struggling with the pandemic, a day of prayer for the care of creation is significant for two reasons. In my homily, I would like to discuss these three reasons.

First, in the previous months, many of us have been involved in prayer asking God to end the pandemic. We should continue such prayers. I would however like to propose that our prayers for an end to the pandemic should include prayer for an end to climate change.

This is because, in the presence of God, everything is inter-connected. In Covid-19 and climate change, we have two global problems. We should not view the two global tragedies as separate and unrelated. They constitute one global crisis, with two different dimensions.

The words of Pope Francis ring true here. “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental” (Laudato Si, 139)

When we come in God’s presence during the pandemic, we should present an integrated prayer. We should be asking God to end both the pandemic and the climate change, and not one at the exclusion of the other.

We should be asking God to “hear both the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor,” and not one at the exclusion of the other.

We should be asking God to give wisdom to our leaders necessary to respond effectively both to the pandemic and the climate change, and not one at the exclusion of the other.

We should be asking God to heal our brokenness as human beings: the brokenness in our hearts, in our nation, and our families. At the same time, we should be asking God to heal the brokenness in the natural world and the animal world. Everything is interconnected.

Secondly, the day of prayer for the care of creation is also a reminder to us that the God who calls us to prayer is also calling us to repentance. Confronted by the pandemic and climate change, many of us are praying.

One of the positive spiritual experiences during the pandemic is that many people have re-discovered the need for prayer, the need to talk and listen to God. However, we need to go beyond prayer. We should have a situation where many have equally rediscovered the need for repentance and openness to receive God’s forgiveness.

Many of us consider ourselves to be victims of the pandemic and climate change, and not perpetrators. We need to wear a new lens so that we begin to see that we are not just victims of the coronavirus. Our sin of consumerism and materialism is responsible for coronavirus and climate change.

If we do not change our behaviour as humans, even if we find a vaccine for the coronavirus, the coronavirus will be followed by many new viruses. If we do not address our consumerism, even if we find a technology to help to decrease greenhouse emissions, a new form of climate change will later emerge.

Our destruction of the environment and our interference with the animal world have provoked what Pope Francis calls “a rebellion in nature (Laudato Si, 117). What we see in the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change is nature in a state of rebellion against us because we are busy destroying the environment and interfering with the animal world.

In Laudato Si, Pope Francis reminds us that we are making a mistake in the way we respond to global problems. We can solve all the problems in the world by simply throwing money, the market, and the technology on the problem, disregarding the ethical and spiritual roots of the problem. We can solve all the problems simply through technological solutions.

As believers in Christ, we should focus on spiritual and ethical solutions to societal problems, and not just technical solutions. While looking for the vaccine for the coronavirus, we should also be looking for a vaccine for the virus that influences us to believe that the deep yearnings in our souls can be satisfied by consumerism, status, violence, and greed, and not by God. We should be looking for repentance and God’s forgiveness.

The day of prayer for the care of God’s creation is therefore a reminder of our need for repentance. Today is a day of repentance.

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will heal their land.”

Today, we therefore stand before God asking God to forgive us for reducing the natural world “solely to raw materials for human exploitation,” something from which “to extract everything possible” ending up with “the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit” (Laudato Si S 106)

Today, we ask God to forgive us for refusing to accept that “the ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us.” Instead, “the ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things” (LS 83).

We ask God to forgive us for failing to see the image of God in those around us, including our enemies and members of our families.

Our hearts are filled with the desire to create wealth at any cost, even at the cost of the environment. Our hearts are filled with the desire to interfere with the animal world without limits and boundaries. Our hearts are filled with hatred, greed, anger and bitterness. However, the power of God’s mercy is greater than our sins.

The power of God's healing is bigger than our cries in face of the pandemic as well as the cries of the earth in the face of the climate change. We therefore pray: Lord, heal the brokenness in our hearts and our families. Lord, heal the brokenness in our nation. Lord, heal the brokenness in our earth. Amen.