September 8th 2024

Rom8: 19- 25 The **First fruits of Hope – Symbol**

In this passage **suffering, hope, and future glory** are linked, in a strange way **offering encouragement to us ALL to persevere** through present difficulties with the assurance of future redemption.

**TO HOPE AND ACT WITH CREATION**

In the news today, we are likely to hear stories about drought, floods, or crop failure in one region, and an outbreak of disease or record-high temperatures in another.

 All too often there are reports of various species being harmed, or driven to extinction, by pollution; or you might hear of entire bodies of water or areas of land no longer being able to sustain plant or animal life.

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.

All this talk can make us feel **that Hope has abandoned** us. However, **Creation** teaches us that hope is present in waiting, in the expectation of a better future (cf. Rom 8:20-21).

We like this quote by St Augustine:

“**HOPE** HAS TWO BEAUTIFUL DAUGTHERS: THEIR NAMES ARE **ANGER** AND **COURAGE.** ANGER AT THE WAY THINGS ARE, AND COURAGE TO SEE THAT THEY DO NOT REMAIN THE WAY THEY ARE”

What is significant in this quotation is the **positive presentation of anger.** For some of us, the experience of anger causes guilt, pain, distress. In so many ways there is an unspoken rule that says “anger” is bad thing, therefore, we work so hard not to be angry.

**But there is a suggestion that “anger” is in fact a “Child” of Hope.**

There is a conviction here that things should not be how they are! In this case anger is an appropriate response to so much that is wrong in the world - Whether it is the abuse of the earth and its resources, or perhaps the lack of better understanding as we witness the cries and sufferings of Earth and all creatures or perhaps how we make better decisions with how we shop, how we recycle and re-use earth resources.

**But hope does not stop with anger,** if it did, it would breed resentment and bitterness and hope would die.

The wisdom of this statement also suggests that hope also gives rise to a constructive response: The desire and energy to make things different.

This energy is called **“Courage”**.

**Hope gives us the courage to resist how things are and the strength to work for that change.**

Hope gives us courage, together, to see that things do not remain as they are.

**To Hope and act with creation. First Fruit of Hope Rom 8: (23-25). 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 expectation for a better future**.

 Let holy anger move us toward the courage to be hopeful and active for justice.

**The different dimensions of hope**

**NB: Add these into talk/ Activity explanation, if approp:**

*Collective action creates grounding hope for those suffering from climate anxiety, being overwhelmed that time is running out. Christian hope fuels transformative action.*

*Transformation takes time, we have to be patient. Hope is also a process, requires patience.*

**Action as a sign of the firstfruits of hope**

* *You don’t see hope, hope is like a seed you have to be patient with and nurture with water to make grow. If you don’t include hope, the seed might not grow. We know sometimes the seed might die, but hope reminds us to keep planting other seeds.*
* *The firstfruits of hope can be seen when we think and work collectively through our Eco Church for example, when we recognize how we depend on Creation, when we listen to the cries of the Earth*

***How we are called to hope and act together with Creation***

* *To hope and act together with Creation we must truly listen to how and why Creation is groaning. We need to push for more action, we're more aware than ever of the problems.*

***BB: Outside: Closing thought:*** *The African wisdom of Ubuntu teaches us that the sense of self is shaped by relationships with others. It takes a village to raise a child. It takes a cosmic collective family to care for Creation. I am because we are, the same goes with Creation. We are nature, nature is us, we are God’s hands for global and cosmic justice.*

Questions:

1. What challenges do you think people face when it comes to recycling?
2. How can we make recycling more accessible and easier for everyone?
3. **Are there ways to repurpose or recycle materials we no longer need?**
4. Any tips on how we can reduce waste in our day-to-day activities:
5. every bin is labelled with what goes inside to encourage make the right decision, however, we continue to struggle sometimes to get it and this could be overwhelming.
   1. compost
   2. recycling
   3. waste to energy
   4. wine bottles
   5. donation

Prayer for the Season of Creation:

**Triune God, Creator of all,**

**We praise you for your goodness, visible in all the**

**diversity that you have created, making us a cosmic**

**family living in a common home. Through the Earth**

**you created, we experience love and nourishment,**

**home and protection.**

**We confess that we do not relate to the Earth as a**

**Mothering gift from you, our Creator.**

**Our selfishness,**

**greed, neglect, and abuse have caused the climate**

**crisis, loss of biodiversity, human suffering as well as**

**the suffering of all our fellow creatures.**

**We confess**

**that we have failed to listen to the groans of the**

**Earth, the groans of all creatures, and the groans of**

**the Spirit of hope and justice that lives within us.**

**May your Creator Spirit help us in our weakness, so**

**that we may know the redeeming power of Christ and**

**the hope found in Him.**

**May the groans of the Spirit**

**birth in us a willingness to serve you faithfully, so that**

**we may hear and heal Creation, to hope and act**

**together with her, so that the firstfruits of hope may**

**blossom.**

**Loving and Creator God, we pray that you will make**

**us sensitive to these groans and enable us to have**

**the same compassion as that of Jesus, the redeeming**

**Lord.**

**Grant us a fresh vision of our relationship with**

**Earth, and with one another, as creatures that are**

**made in your image.**

**In the name of the one who came to proclaim the**

**good news to all Creation, Jesus Christ.**

**Amen.**