

The Talk : AAW: September 8th 2024

Let's think back, please, to our reading today, from Romans 8.

“We know that the whole of creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth, right up to the present time... we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly’: these **first fruits of the spirit are of hope**, and this is represented by this year's Season of Creation logo, which you can see on your pew leaflet and order of service sheet (there's a colour version on the Eco display board, too).

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 (please do see a copy of this, again on the Eco church display board-it's a beautiful and moving work).

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 (Rom 8:20-21:).

We like this quote by St Augustine:

“HOPE HAS TWO BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS: 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 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 can 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 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, plumbing that first fruit of hope Rom 8: (23-25).**

This biblical image reminds us that we tend not to 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.

(The different dimensions of hope)

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

Transformation takes time, we have to be patient. Hope is also a process, so it 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 and nurture it with water to make it 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.

To hope and act together with Creation we must truly listen to how and why Creation is groaning. We're more aware than ever of the problems, so we need to push for more action, by ourselves and by our MPs, government, shops, suppliers.

The first fruits of hope can be seen when we think and work collectively; when we recognize how we depend on Creation, when we listen to the cries of the Earth, and take actions together, no matter how small, to be stewards for our planet, through our Eco church for example.

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

Activity: *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. We are nature, nature is us, we are God's hands for global and cosmic justice.*

Explain activity: *to sort waste items that some of us at least, struggle with how to best recycle.*

Questions following the sorting activity: (take mic around congregation)

- Any first thoughts ?
- 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 other/more ways to repurpose or recycle materials we no longer need/any tips on how we can reduce waste in our day-to-day activities?

Thank those sharing thoughts & try to incorporate in ending.

Explain about the 2 new recycling posts which Lise & Babs are offering to trial from today & welcome their use by everyone.

