

LENT – RECONCILIATION, 2021

You were created to make a unique contribution
to the great evolutionary project
initiated and continually supported by God,
namely,
***bringing all creation together into
one magnificent conscious loving union ...***

Individually and joined with others,
you are to use all means available to promote
and carry out this shared purpose
with all your personal
creativity,
compassion
and
energy

REVERENCING OUR PLANET

We look to God to discover how to love

- 1 God has gifted us with life and the world.
- 2 God remains at our side along with the gifts given
- 3 God keeps acting through these gifts with us and for us
- 4 God shares the divine self with us to act as one: *I in God and God in me.*

According to St Ignatius of Loyola there are two spiritual truths about love:

- 1 Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words (320)
- 2 Love consists in mutual communication between two persons. That is, the one who loves gives and communicates to the beloved what they have or can have.
And the beloved in return does the same for the lover (231)

Falling in love with Jesus is an essential part of Christian spirituality. We always go astray when we lose focus on Christ. However, it is necessary that we also fall in love with the Cosmos or Universe which is an expression of God's love. **We cannot limit our spirituality to just me and God.** God is in all things. Therefore, in consideration for all our brothers and sisters, and especially for future generations we are obliged to reverence the planet we live on as well as all who live on it. It is after all a gift. We are an evolving people awakening to a new and broader way of seeing how we fit into God's plan. As emphasised in our first Lenten homily, ***"The time has come and the kingdom of God is close at hand. This means that the Spirit is drawing all things into one magnificent conscious loving union. NOW!"*** "Repentance" is an invitation to join in.

All throughout history, **moments arrive** when change is not only called for but demanded. Just think of some of New Zealand's recent history:

- In the 1950's a growing awareness began in NZ to South Africa's apartheid policy. In 1969 HART was set up. **Halt All Racist Tours**. It grew in power and partly as a result of this protest, in 1994 apartheid was finally dismantled. A new awareness of racism grew and so today, playing rugby under apartheid conditions would surely be unthinkable.
- In 1975, the New Zealand government finally set up a tribunal to address claims of breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840).
- In the 1960's the world was on the brink of nuclear war. It is still a danger, but it is to New Zealand's credit that in 1987 New Zealand was declared Nuclear Free, a policy later accepted by all parties.
- In this parish last year, a Covenant was signed between Ngati Kapu and the Archbishop and others to recognise the Mana of Ngati Kapu as the Kaitiaki of the Word of God and agreeing to ensure that this parish is first and foremost Maori.

In each of the above stories, the time to do what was right finally arrived. All of the above happened because of a growing awareness among people. This also happened in the biblical story: - a growing awareness that an anointed one of God would come.

Jesus came when the time was right, and through the resurrection is still here, continuing through us to build the kingdom, or in the words before **bringing all creation together into one magnificent conscious loving union**.

If we look closely at the changes brought about in New Zealand, we see that they happened because a few people set out on the path of raising awareness in society.

In week two of this Lenten season, the gospel focused on Jesus purifying the Temple...his Father's house. Our homilist described our planet as being like a Temple, and rightly so, for it is holy ... the Son of God came into it in the person of Jesus and as the Risen Lord he has permeated every aspect of creation. The Temple in Jesus time has been destroyed. The world is God's Temple now. We must love it as Jesus loved his Father's house:

A reading from the Gospel of John.

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."^[a]

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

²⁰ They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

- First of all notice the passion in Jesus for the purification of the Temple.

It would also appear in the story that what Jesus is objecting to is the buyers and the sellers. They have convinced themselves they are performing a ministry, so are unaware of perpetuating a social injustice. Pope John Paul 11 became increasingly concerned about human beings who “see no other meaning in their natural environment than what served for immediate use and consumption”. He called for a “global conversion”, which means we must all become aware of the issues.

Pope Francis writes: *Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the suffering of the excluded. The worldwide ecological movement has already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organisations committed to raising awareness of these challenges. Regrettably, many efforts have proved ineffective because of: obstructionist attitudes, even on the part of believers:*

- **indifference**
- **nonchalant resignation**
- **blind confidence in technical solutions.**

Each of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements, talents. Pope Francis challenges us in his encyclical ‘Laudato Si’ to look at the world from the following ways:

- How we care for the environment?
- How we manage wealth?
- How we care for society?

EXAMEN

Do I reverence earth? Do I try to find God in creation?

How has creation moved me to reverence God and people?

What is happening at my back door? Recycling, composting?

Do I use my own wealth in way that largely ignores the welfare of others?

How do I give back to my community or work to ensure it is a place where people belong?

It is estimated that at least two million groups worldwide are working to:

- Confront local injustice
- Find solutions to world hunger & poverty (Caritas)
- Research scientists finding new drugs to alleviate suffering
- Journalists awakening people to the world’s problems
- People working with the unemployed
- People working in various branches of ecology
- People working to establish communities which give a sense of belonging and welcoming all, regardless of sexual orientation or race.

- Those calling for an end to war and racial equality
- Justice for those sexually abused in faith-based institutions
- Respect for life from beginning to end, especially women, children, the aged
- People dedicated to praying for peace and justice
- People in our parish working with Benefit Impact & WINZ
- Vincent de Paul Societies in our parishes.
- Journalists awakening people to the world's problems

How do we wound the world?

Throw-away culture Wasteful of energy Consumerism Permitting poverty
 Subtle racism Lack of effort to build relationships with others
 Indifference Nonchalant resignation Closed mindedness Selfish living
 Blind confidence in technical solutions Judgemental attitudes Lack of reverence for life

We take time now to ponder these issues in our own lives.

ACT OF CONTRITION & ABSOLUTION

A prayer for the earth

God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of all your creatures. Pour out on us the power of your love that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

A Christian prayer in union with creation

Father, we praise you with all your creatures. Son of God, Jesus, through you all things were made, you were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother, you became part of the earth and you gazed upon the world with human eyes. Holy Spirit you guide this world towards the Father's love and accompany creation as it groans in travail. You also dwell in our hearts and you inspire us to do good.

Wondrous God, teach us to contemplate you in the beauty of the universe for all things speak of you. Awaken our praise and thankfulness for every being you have made. Show us our place in this world as channels of your love. Enlighten those who possess power and wealth to avoid the sin of indifference and so love the common good. Seize us with your power and light so that we may work to bring this world into one magnificent, conscious loving union. A kingdom of justice, peace, love and beauty. Praise be to you, O God!

NOTE: This Communal Reconciliation Service has been inspired by Laudato Si, Pope Francis; The New Spiritual Exercises, Louis M Savery; and the Lenten Homilies by Jack Leason, Pukekaraka, Otaki, 2021. The adaptation to quotes are mine, Alan Roberts.