

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Pope Francis has established September 1 for Catholics as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. Eastern Orthodox Churches have observed the same date for 30 years. Now many Christian groups, including ours, have set the time between September 1 and the feast of St. Francis of Assisi as a monthlong season of creation. History remembers St. Francis not only for his simplicity of life, but for his appreciation of life. Nearing his death, he composed the canticle of creation, in which he praised God for Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brothers Wind and Air, Sister Water, Brother Fire, Sister Earth, our mother, and even Sister Death, whom we must all face. Saint Francis composed his canticle in his native language, Italian, and the opening words, *Laudato si'* became the title of Pope Francis's encyclical on Care for our Common Home.

It doesn't take much work to see connections between Jesus and creation. Even in today's short gospel he addresses a simple request about faith by speaking of a mustard seed, a mulberry tree, the sea, plowing, and the tending of sheep. The wisdom of God charges all creation and leads us back to the Creator.

This year Pope Francis wrote, "Now is the time to rediscover our vocation as children of God, brothers and sisters, and stewards of creation." He asks us to let our prayer be inspired anew by closeness to creation, to reflect on our lifestyles, and to undertake prophetic actions. The pope writes, "[Let us consider] how our daily decisions about food, consumption, transportation, use of water, energy and many other material goods, can often be thoughtless and harmful. Too many of us act like tyrants with regard to creation. Let us make an effort to change and to adopt more simple and respectful lifestyles! Now is the time to abandon our dependence on fossil fuels and move, quickly and decisively, towards forms of clean energy and a sustainable and circular economy."

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops similarly encourages families and individuals to consider practical actions. They write this: "Counteract the 'Throwaway Culture': ... In your daily life, try to identify the ways in which you can choose reusables, rather than disposables, such as coffee mugs, reusable bags, or cloth napkins, and commit to making one change during this month.... Meal Prayer: Before and after meals, say a short prayer of thanksgiving for the lifegiving food that sustains and nourishes us. Briefly consider how all nourishment ultimately comes from the earth, and give thanks for all the human hands that helped bring this food to your table.... Confession: In calling for a deep 'ecological conversion,' Pope Francis has emphasized the importance of examining one's own conscience, of recognizing one's sins against creation, however great or small. ... We invite you to bring these sins to confession and to perform a spiritual work of mercy for our common home, such as an act of 'grateful contemplation of God's world.'"

In today's gospel Jesus goads his disciples. He tells them if they had faith the size of a mustard seed, they could move a mulberry tree into action; but they can't, so they don't. He also says that if they just do their duties, they are "unprofitable servants." Taking care of the earth today is our duty. But to be profitable servants, we need to do more. Let's stir up our faith and preserve the earth for tomorrow.

Sunday, October 6, 2019