



July 16, 2023

15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

For creation awaits with eager expectation...in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. Romans 8:19-21



Dear Friends,

Modern humans tend to think of themselves as something separate from the rest of creation rather than being interwoven with the natural world. This leads to the idea that we can dominate and exploit the natural world. Creation is thought to have value insofar as it serves our needs and desires. Then we imagine that at the end of the world creation will be tossed away, because redeemed from death, we will no longer have need of the world and its creatures.

This attitude is born more of ancient Greek philosophy than it is based in Jewish and Christian Scriptures. In addition, modern capitalist economic theory leads us to conceive of salvation as an individual consumer choice in a marketplace of competing religious ideas. In the Christian context it is reduced to “I got Jesus; I am saved.”

Our parable, from the Gospel of Matthew, the Sower and the Seed describes farming and sowing. It takes something from the human and natural worlds to speak of the loving, abundantly generous God who looks to our needs—especially of the poor. The Prophet Isaiah uses another natural image to speak of the effectiveness of the word of God. God’s word is like rain and snow that water the earth. They make the earth to come alive and bring forth seed that becomes bread that nourishes humans.

St Paul in the Letter to the Romans is telling us that we are not the only ones who will be saved. God does not intend to throw creation away like a paper wrapper on a candy bar. No. The whole of creation is a precious to God as are we. God is intending to save us all!

Pope Francis in his pastoral letter *Laudato Si* criticizes the Humans-at-the-pinnacle of creation world view as “inadequate” and “wrong.” Pope Francis instructs us,

In our time the Church does not simply state that other creatures are subordinate to the good of human beings, as if they had no worth in themselves and can be treated as we wish. They have an intrinsic value in God’s eyes independent of their usefulness to us. (No. 140)

The Pope is contributing something new to Catholic teaching! Other creatures have worth apart from us.

The Scriptures today are inviting us to expand our awareness beyond the self, the human world, to the larger world to which we are integrally connected. We need to be converted to the Earth as one beloved community. Theologian Elizabeth A Johnson, C.S.J. writes,

“Our times urge us to develop an ecological sense of ourselves in tune with an ecological God. In light of our common creator, we need to expand our sense of identity to include relationship with other creatures, the land, waters and air, all creation itself. Once we have truly appreciated the life of ‘the other,’ we arrive at a new starting point for decision-making...Humbled and delighted by the life around us, we can begin to hear the cry of the Earth, and the cry of the poor, and step up to protect our kin.”

Let us use this summertime to renew our connection to the natural world and our commitment to protect it!

Peace,

Fr Ron

Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: www.anne.church