

***St Mary's Concord***  
***A Reflection based on the Homily for***  
***22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time***  
***29 August 2021***

READINGS YEAR B: Deut 4:1-2,6-8; James 1:17-18,21-22; Mark 7:1-6, 14-15, 21-23.

*To contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus all churches have been closed since 26 June 2021. One Mass is permitted so that it can be live-streamed to the parish YouTube channel and to the parish Facebook page: "St Mary's Parish Church Concord". The following reflection is based on the homily from that Mass.*

"The scene begins with a young boy riding his bike down a bush track when he comes across a young girl observing forestry workers marking trees. As we are drawn into the story, we learn that they are trying to protect a koala habitat and as we see a rescued koala safely returned to one of the trees the slogan appears:  
"Every home is worth protecting".

Of course, it is a clever promotion for NRMA Home Insurance. Clever, not only because it has attracted our attention, but also it has been able to make a connection between our need to protect our homes and the much bigger question of protecting the home we all share, the earth.

Today is Social Justice Sunday and this year's statement is entitled "Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor". (For more information go to the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference Office for Justice, Ecology and Peace, [www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au))

The fundamental issue that it explores is the connection between our relationships with each other and our relationship with nature. Living in an urban environment, we have some sense of the impact that fires, floods and drought have on communities. But the 24 hour news cycle, quickly moves our attention to the next event.

In fact, there is so much news, that we have become desensitized to the human suffering and destruction caused by the natural disasters: a flood in Germany, a forest fire in California or in Greece, a cyclone in Haiti. And they are only some examples of an ever increasing list of natural disasters that are linked to climate change.

Next Wednesday, 1 September, marks the beginning of the *Season of Creation*. It was originally launched in 1989 by the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople and has since become a world-wide movement of Christian Churches, who come together each year from 1st September until 4th October – the feast of St Francis of Assisi, to pray for our common home, the planet earth.

Every year the Season of Creation features a new theme and a new logo for Christians to unite around as they care for God's creation. This year's theme is "A home for all? Renewing the Oikos of God".

OIKOS is a Greek word that is translated into English as a home or a household. What is interesting are the other words that come from it: OIKONOMIA -which gives us ECONOMY - the study of how human activity is inter-connected, and OIKOLOGIA- in English ECOLOGY - the study of relationships within the natural world.

The logo this year for the Season of Creation is a tent, but not just any tent. It is Abraham's Tent. However, to understand the image, we also need to read chpt 18 of the Book of Genesis. Abraham had pitched his tent by the Oaks of Mamre, when three strangers walked into his camp.

Hospitality demanded that they be made welcome, and so Abraham and Sarah offered them food. In return, they bestowed God's blessing upon Abraham and Sarah. The strangers were messengers from God. Sarah would give birth to a child Isaac, through whom Abraham would become the father of a nation. Abraham's tent becomes the symbol of the OIKOS - the Household of God.

In the *Season of Creation*, we are called to care for our common home so that it truly will be a home for all God's creatures. At the heart of that message is our inter-connectedness.

When human activity, the economy, only focusses on creating wealth for the few, the whole Household of God suffers. Ecology is the study of that Household - the inter-relatedness of all creation.

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The Gospel and the 1st reading from the Book of Deuteronomy also reminded us that we cannot ignore our relationship to GOD. Abraham and his descendants had been chosen to reveal God's unfolding plan for humanity. To do that, they were to live as God's People.

But they failed to understand what that meant. They attempted to take control by reducing their relationship to God, to a human institution with a complex system of laws and statutes. The Law of Moses began as an embodiment of the Covenant, the relationship of the people with God. But over generations it had become a barrier that oppressed ordinary people.

That's why in Mark's Gospel, Jesus speaks so harshly to the scribes and the pharisees, the ones who interpreted and applied the laws. What Jesus offered was not a system of laws but a new way to God, a new relationship with God.

His way called for a change of heart. To look at the world not through the filter of self-interest, but through self-giving. We become God's People by becoming one with him. And when we do that, we become part of a transformation that Mark's Gospel calls the Kingdom of God.

That transformation has already begun, but it is also important to understand that its fulfilment is still to come. Are we making progress? What are the signs that give us hope?

In 2015 Pope Francis wrote about the need to care for our common home. His letter called for the integration of our economic, social and ecological policies. He began his letter with a quote from St Francis of Assisi. The opening words in Italian are "Laudato Si, mi signore" – "Praise be to you, my Lord".

*Laudato Si* became the title of the letter. Now *Laudato Si* is also the title of a global Catholic movement that aims to promote care for our common home.

It presents us with seven goals:

- Responding to the cry of the earth
- Responding to the cry of the poor
- Embracing ecological economics
- Adopting simple lifestyles
- Promoting ecological education
- Developing an ecological spirituality
- Creating community involvement and action

Climate Change is a real threat and sometimes, because the task seems so great, we choose to do nothing. But as the NRMA reminded us, every home is worth protecting and this earth is the only home we have. We need to ensure that it remains a home for all.

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