

Reflection for Thursday 8th October 2020

A few days ago, on 4th October, we would have celebrated the feast of St Francis of Assisi but it happened to fall on a Sunday so the Sunday Mass took precedence over it. At this time in the year we are encouraged to focus on the wonder and beauty of God's creation and on our responsibilities for the care of the environment.

The world we live in is very much like a vineyard or garden which needs to be constantly tended with loving care. We were given the responsibility to care for the earth at the beginning of time when God said to Adam, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over it.' (Gen 1:28)

But having dominion over it doesn't mean that we can abuse the gifts of God's creation by recklessly plundering the earth of all that it contains. We need to manage the earth's resources responsibly so that we enhance the treasures which God has hidden within the earth, not use them up at an alarming rate so that they are not replenished.

We also have a responsibility to share the earth's resources among all the people on the planet and not keep it all for ourselves so that while we have more than our fair share others are going hungry and disadvantaged.

When God said increase and multiply and fill the earth he wanted us to make full use of the natural world and the wonderful resources He has provided. We need to respond by accepting these gifts in faith and with gratitude and the understanding that God would not give us a world that would not be able to support us. There is more than enough resources in the world for everyone but unfortunately they are not evenly distributed around the globe.

But the elephant in the room, the real problem with our relationship with our environment and the life sustaining eco system on which we depend for our survival, lies in our addiction to materialism and the mentality of instant gratification and compulsive consumerism. We

want something and we want it now. We can do this at the press of a button, click and collect, order today delivered tomorrow. This mentality produces a vast amount of waste, exploitation and a throwaway attitude towards the planet and even to human life itself.

The same mentality regards human life as disposable. If someone's life is inconvenient or unproductive or simply unwanted it can be disposed of. A good example is babies with downs syndrome, where hardly any are now allowed to be born because they are undesirable. Another example could be the drive towards making euthanasia acceptable.

On a much bigger scale there is a movement to try to solve the ecological problems of the planet by reducing the global population. Often, rich countries which offer overseas aid to developing countries make it a condition that some of the money is spent on abortion and contraception programmes to keep the population down.

But have we forgotten that mankind is the peak of God's creation and that the world was made for us, the people he has chosen as his own, he who knows us even before we are born, who knit us together in our mother's womb, who has made us little less than gods, as the psalmist says? Only when we restore our relationship with God, with each other and with the world can healing and renewal begin.

Deacon Kevin