

Integral Faith

"Homily helps and liturgy resources highlighting care for our common home."



Homily Helps, Petitions, and Bulletin Notices for the 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A (23 July 2017)

Homily Helps

† Comment for the day:

Humanity finds itself at a crossroads. Unless we make significant changes to our collective thinking, attitudes and actions, we will continue on the path of unwitting self-destruction. However, as St. Paul asserts, we can count on the Holy Spirit to come to our aid. One of the ways in which the Holy Spirit does so emerges from our own history as a Christian community. We encounter this when we immerse ourselves in the fullness of the ancient tradition of the Church, a fullness we sometimes lose sight of. Both the Bible and the patristic authors affirm that God speaks to us through two sacred books: the book of Creation and the book of Scripture. For this reason we find ourselves on familiar ground when Pope Francis devotes a chapter of his encyclical *Laudato Si'* to "the Gospel of Creation."

The Fourth Sunday of July offers a great opportunity to evangelize because it calls our attention to the glory of God reflected in nature. This is an opportunity that we as preachers and teachers do well to take advantage of. One approach would be to begin with those moments in our own lives when we ourselves have been deeply moved by the beauty of God's magnificent creation. One can then segue into speaking about Jesus, how he so often sought refuge in the wilderness or walking through the Galilean hills and meadows as he turned to prayer. Drawing spiritual insights and wisdom from the Book of Creation, Jesus was able to share the mysteries of the Kingdom of God with his followers. Today's Gospel exemplifies such teaching moments of Jesus.

Laudato Si' provides us with the resources for unpacking these insights and pointing others to the recovery of the ancient teachings of the Church about the book of Creation.

At the same time, in truth, these insights have serious implications, and we must have the moral courage to point this out. The political and economic decisions we make at that city, state, or national level can either honor and protect God's creation, or they can rip it apart and trample it underfoot. Our commitment to truth obliges us to speak that truth to power and boldly defend what is part of the core of our faith tradition. Failing to raise critical moral questions about current efforts to undermine environmental protection and climate justice run the risk of complicity with a system that turns God's creation into an object for exploitation.

That said, it is also important to end on a hopeful note, one consonant with the Gospel message. Jesus points to the tiny mustard seed and how it gives rise to the largest of plants. One analogy might be to point out that a seemingly small change in attitude or daily habits can have enormous positive consequences. Indeed, as we lead other people to rediscover the ancient teaching of the church about the sacredness of the world, we should also be willing to uncover how profoundly sacred and meaningful our own lives, struggles and actions are.

This resource is provided by Catholic Climate Covenant in collaboration with the Integral Faith Team, a group of male and female religious, priests, and lay people dedicated to serving the Church.

Homily Helps (cont.)

† Scripture passages to note:

Romans 8: The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness.

Matthew 13: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants."

† Passages from Laudato Si' to note:

God has written a precious book "whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe." The Canadian bishops rightly pointed out that no creature is excluded from this manifestation of God: "From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is also a continuing revelation of the divine." The bishops of Japan, for their part, made a thought-provoking observation: "To sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God's love and hope." This contemplation of creation allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us, since "for the believer, to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice." We can say that "alongside revelation properly so-called, contained in sacred Scripture, there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night." Paying attention to this manifestation, we learn to see ourselves in relation to all other creatures: **"I express myself in expressing the world; in my effort to decipher the sacredness of the world, I explore my own."** (#85)

The universe as a whole, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible riches of God. Saint Thomas Aquinas wisely noted that multiplicity and variety "come from the intention of the first agent" who willed that "what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another", inasmuch as God's goodness "could not be represented fittingly by any one creature". Hence we need to grasp the variety of things in their multiple relationships. (#86)

Related Prayers of the Faithful

Option 1: For our Church, that the Holy Spirit may guide her to rediscover the spiritual values and religious significance of God's creation, let us pray to the Lord....

Option 2: That all Christians may take to heart the teachings of Jesus and do our part to safeguard God's creation, let us pray to the Lord....

Further Resources

Feedback: IntegralFaithForLife@gmail.com

Webpage: www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/resource/english-homily-help

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