

Integral Faith

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



Catholic Climate Covenant™
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

Homily Helps, Petitions, and Bulletin Notices for Ash Wednesday, Cycle B (17 February 2021)

Homily Helps

† Scripture passages to note:

Joel: Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God.

Responsorial Psalm: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

2 Corinthians: We are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us...Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Matthew: Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them...And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

† Comment for the day:

The celebration of Ash Wednesday sets a tone for our celebration of the season of Lent. Today's first reading from the prophet Joel invites us to return to God with our whole heart. We are reminded of and recognize our sinfulness in the responsorial psalm. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians declares that now is the acceptable time to renew our process of conversion, and challenges us to become ambassadors of Christ in our world. Our invitation to conversion is not a private call, but is meant to be seen in the context of the invitation that goes to all people. Matthew reminds us that we need to be humble in the effort to live our lives in Christ; God will repay us many times over for the good that we do.

We can easily see Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* as a call to live a Lenten season in regard to our commitment to defend both the environment and all of God's creatures, especially the poorest and most excluded of our sisters and brothers. Early in his letter, Pope Francis reminds us of the call of St. John Paul II for global ecological conversion, adding that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach, integrating questions of justice in debates on the environment. This allows us to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

This Lent might become for us an extended examination of conscience that helps us to scrutinize our personal "ecological virtues" along with the virtues that we cultivate as a society. It is not enough to verbally express concern for the environmental crisis and the devastation experienced by the poor and marginalized. Rather, we must find ways to overcome the harmful habits that lead to these problems. The Spirit of God has filled the universe with all sorts of possibilities; we must discover them and find ways to implement them in our lives. During this Lent, we can begin by asking ourselves who or what is at the center of my life. If I find myself at the center, it will be very difficult to embark on the ecological conversion proposed by Pope Francis.

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.

In the encyclical we hear the voice of the bishops of New Zealand. They ask what the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” means when “twenty percent of the world’s population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive?” Their question is practical and incisive. We must find the honesty to evaluate our own lives and that of our society in order to face and overcome the crises that beset us.

At the end of the encyclical, Pope Francis reminds us that, “Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world.” Perhaps preachers can use the Sundays of Lent as an opportunity to challenge their congregations to find concrete ways to live the ecological challenge provided in *Laudato Si’*.

† **Passages from *Laudato Si’* to note:**

Today...we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. (#49)

People may well have a growing ecological sensitivity but it has not succeeded in changing their harmful habits of consumption... (#55)

The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore, from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge... (#80)

Discovering this presence [of the Spirit of life] leads us to cultivate the “ecological virtues.” (#88)

...the New Zealand bishops asked what the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” means when “twenty percent of the world’s population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive.” (#95)

When human beings place themselves at the center, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience, and all else becomes relative. (#122)

Related Prayers of the Faithful

Option 1: That our Lenten celebration might challenge us to examine our faith and take concrete action that flows from that faith, let us pray to the Lord...

Option 2: That strengthened by our Lenten observance, we might truly be ambassadors of Christ in our world, let us pray to the Lord...

Further Resources

Feedback: IntegralFaithForLife@gmail.com

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

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