

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 (February 14, 2024)

Homily Helps

† Scripture Passages to Note:

Joel 2: 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.

Psalm 51: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

2 Corinthians 5: 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 6: 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.

† Comments 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. Then, 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 experience Lent with a commitment to defend not only the environment, but all of God's creatures, especially the poorest and most excluded sisters and brothers. The pope 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 about the environment. This allows us "to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor." (49)

The encyclical also quotes the bishops of New Zealand, who 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?" (95) Their question is practical and incisive. We must find the honesty to evaluate both our own lives and our society, in order to overcome the crises that beset us, including climate change. 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.

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 and underlying forces that lead to these problems.

The Spirit of God has filled the universe with all sorts of possibilities. During our Lenten journey, we must discover them and then implement them in our lives.

† Passages from *Laudato Si'* to Note:

“Inasmuch as we all generate small ecological damage”, we are called to acknowledge “our contribution, smaller or greater, to the disfigurement and destruction of creation”.... For “to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God”. (8)

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)

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

A healthy relationship with creation is one dimension of overall personal conversion, which entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures, and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change. ... “To achieve such reconciliation, we must examine our lives and acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God’s creation through our actions and our failure to act. We need to experience a conversion, or change of heart”. (218)

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

Visit our webpage and sign up to receive these resources delivered to your email inbox each month.