

Pastoral Letter for the 26th Sunday of Ordinary Time

To be read at all Sunday Masses on 30 September and 1 October 2023
(Conclusion of the Season of Creation)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Care for Creation: Commitments, Actions and Participation

As the Season of Creation draws to a close for this year, we are invited to reflect on the readings from Scripture we have just heard. In today's first reading from the prophet Ezekiel, we hear the abrupt and possibly harsh call which warns the wicked to renounce their ways and holds those who witness evil and do nothing responsible. The Gospel tells us how we should react to wrong-doing: by facing it, naming it, and trying to remedy it.

These passages from scripture are often invoked as a call to personal repentance, but after this summer of fires and floods, of record temperatures, and devastated landscapes, I am led to reflect on our call to be a prophetic voice on the ills of our times. Especially on the potential catastrophic effects of climate change which not only negatively impact human life but all animal and plant life on land and sea.

This coming Wednesday Pope Francis will be publishing a follow up to his 2015 letter Laudato Si'. Addressed to the whole world, the title of both publications derives from the first words of a St Francis of Assisi prayer – whose feast day we will celebrate on 4 October. St Francis wrote, "Praise be to brother sun and sister moon." By addressing all creation in this way, he reminds us that we are all interconnected.

There is no place for attitudes that think fires in Southern Europe, North Africa and Canada are no concern of ours. St Thomas Aquinas, the great Dominican philosopher and theologian, said “In every living creature there is a trace of the Trinity”.

In Laudato Si’ Pope Francis draws together centuries of prayer and wisdom and asks us to urgently “Listen to the Cry of the Earth, and the Cry of the Poor”. The Synod was part of that listening, as we built relationships with one another, and discerned a way forward for a more sustainable Church. That is why today you are receiving an update on what the Archdiocese is doing, and what you can do as an individual and a parish.

October sees the Archdiocese re-commit itself to creating a more sustainable world and I have chosen to bring this under the banner of Care for Creation. This phrase captures our Christian call to love each other and care for God’s Earth.

I am aware of the need to be a steward of our resources, people, and environment and I am supported by all who work and volunteer within the Archdiocese – so I wish to share some of this with you.

Within the Archdiocese our buildings are already supplied by electricity generated from renewable energy, such as wind and solar, and 80 percent of the gas we burn is produced from renewable resources. This year, we are preparing a Net Zero carbon emissions plan that will identify how we can become even greener. We continue to take seriously how our money is invested: we have established a Responsible Investment Policy, and invited people into conversations about our sustainable livelihoods and the impact of our investments.

In our schools, we will continue to deliver education and resources to seek behavioural change at an individual and school level. CAFOD’s Live Simply campaign continues to engage the interest of our young people.

Across deaneries, our own environmental training programme has prepared more than 40 Care for Creation leaders promoting action in parishes.

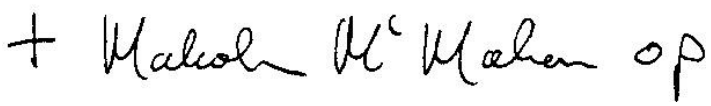
At the launch of the Pastoral Plan, after our diocesan Synod, I encouraged schools, parishes, and each one of us to make pledges. I invite you again to reflect on this Season of Creation. I hope that you may become inspired to build God’s Kingdom on earth through practical, spiritual, and other activities that bring us together in more sustainable relationships.

You may pledge to eat less meat; walk rather than drive whenever possible; reduce air travel; limit the number of new clothes you buy. You may wish to pray that we take the environmental situation seriously or meditate on God's creation – being attentive to the gift of life and practising gratitude for the world around us. You may commit to joining an environmental group or working with other local churches – building new and life-giving relationships.

This is not just another environmental campaign; it is an integral part of our faith. It is about commitment, action, and participation in the work that Christ asks of us. In coming together as a parish, in making your personal pledges, in striving to heal the planet – you are a living witness to Jesus Christ. So do not be afraid to tell people why you are working for justice for the world's poorest people. You are working as a response to God's call, expressed through today's psalm:

"He guides the humble in the right path, He teaches his way to the poor."

May the Lord of all creation bless you and your families,



Malcolm McMahon OP
Archbishop of Liverpool