

Creation: A Relationship Of Respect

Rev. Patrick Stephens

*First Week of Lent
Saturday March 12*

Scripture

Matthew 25:34b-36, 40b

Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me ... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me

Reflection

Sometimes I hear people say that they feel they do not pray as much as they think they should. While I believe that spending time speaking to God and listening for God's Spirit to speak to us is very important, I also have the feeling that most people spend more time in prayer than they realize. There are many ways to pray: speaking from the heart, reading or reciting written prayers, silent meditation, singing hymns, praying scripture passages and walking a labyrinth are a few good examples.

Another important type of prayer is that of actively caring for others. Caring for other people helps us build empathy and compassion. It also allows us to encounter the presence of God in another person's life and to reflect on how God is at work in our own lives. Whether big or small, these acts have a way of breaking down barriers and building trust through the shared experience of vulnerability and care.

In the same way that caring for other people can build trust and empathy for our neighbours, actively caring for nature builds an appreciation for, and investment in, God's creation. As we curb our consumption of natural resources, reduce pollution, revive traditional knowledge and practices of care for our ecosystems, and advocate for climate justice at home and abroad, we participate in the renewal of a relationship between us and the earth itself.

If, like many people, you feel the pull to spend more time in prayer, consider encountering God's goodness through the active care of God's creation. At the conclusion of each small action, feel free to say a hearty "Amen!"

Prayer

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.*

*Where there is offence, let me bring pardon.
Where there is discord, let me bring union.
Where there is error, let me bring truth.
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.
O Master, let me not seek as much
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that one receives,
it is in self-forgetting that one finds,
it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,
it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life.
Prayer traditionally associated with St. Francis of Assis*

Worship resource promotes caring for the earth

In the time before COVID-19 (remember then?) I developed “A Covenant for Climate Justice,” a worship resource for PWRDF focussing on climate justice and creation care. Using the two “trees of life” that frame the biblical text in Genesis and Revelation I invited worshippers to consider what it means to “keep covenant” with God and with God’s creation as we witness the growing impacts of climate change: “fires, floods, storms and devastating destruction.”

While COVID-19 has swept climate change off the front pages, it is still very much with us. And some are arguing that COVID-19 is itself a result of humankind’s impacts on God’s created order. In downtown Toronto where I live, the “pause” that resulted from lockdown brought quiet to the city, cleaner air and wild animals. An enormous falcon appeared one morning on a courtyard tree, right next to my balcony. My son spotted a fox while out running. NASA satellite imagery showed significant reductions in pollution above major cities.

We CAN keep covenant.

There IS hope.

Whether celebrated online or in-person, PWRDF’s worship resource is an opportunity to consider the ways in which we and our development partners are called to keep covenant, to have hope. A Eucharistic order of service and a Service of the Word are accompanied by prayers, readings, PWRDF partner stories and a sample sermon. A recorded version of the sermon is also available for use in your parish. To download an MP4 of this sermon, please contact Christine Hills, our Public Engagement Program officer. Share a recorded version of Suzanne Rumsey’s sermon with your congregation.

As we enter what has come to be observed in many churches as the Season of Creation, (September 1 to October 4) we invite parishes to dip into this worship resource and discover how it can be used. If not during this September window, it can also be used for a “PWRDF Sunday” that your parish designates, including the Sunday before or after Earth Day (April 22) on Rogation Sunday (May 9, 2021). As ever

we invite such a service to be an opportunity to take up a special offering for the work of PWRDF's partners throughout the world who are keeping covenant in many important ways with and for their communities and God's creation.

Read the whole story on our website at
<https://pwrdf.org/covenantforclimatechange/>

Tomorrow:
*The Second Sunday in Lent, take a Sabbath rest
and reflect on last week's readings*