

**Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time B - God entrusts this work of creation to humankind, but humanity does not go in that direction.**

August 1, 2021.

***Jesus said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."*** (John 16:34)

Right from the beginning, God give us abundant foods: spiritually for strength, wisdoms, love, compassion, humility, ..., and physically, enough veggies and fruits that we can share with others. Genesis tells us: **"God saw that it was good." Then God entrusts this work of creation to humankind to take care of, but we don't go in that direction.**

For example, food in the summer can be especially delightful. If you live in the country or have a garden in your balcony or yard, the ripeness of the summer crop enriches all the senses; nothing can be more wonderful than a sun-warmed tomato off the vine or plump berries picked from lush bushes. Now that everything is back to normal, even city dwellers can get fresh food from farmers' markets: like sweet corn picked early that morning from a farmer's field can be on your table for lunch. But, with the current climate change, this may not last. For the past decade, the greenhouse gas causes the current global warming, glaciers melting, forests burning, rivers flooding, farms drying. We have dumped our waste into water without being aware of the consequences on aquatic life. And in the news, people even predict Nova Scotia will eventually become an island. We have sinned against God's creations. **Nature becomes an object at our disposal. We use it for our own personal interest, without taking into account the life process behind it, without giving gratitude for God's love and compassion for creating it and inviting us to be co-creators of it.**

Most people attribute Pope Francis with calling the world to an **"ecological conversion" in his encyclical Laudato si'**. But in that 2015 document on **"care for our common home"**, he says it was actually **St. John Paul II who first called for a "global ecological conversion" in early 2001**. But what exactly does global ecological conversion mean? And, more importantly, how do we put it in practice, or have we? Our dear friend **Father Anthony Chang Sang-loy (鄭生來神父)**, who officiated our wedding, is the **founder of the Catholic Messengers of Green Consciousness** in Hong Kong (天主教綠識傳人). **He defines environmental protection as a way to safeguard a healthy relationship between nature, humanity and God.** The 79-year-old diocesan priest set up the group in 1989 and began to promote the recycling of discarded clothes in parishes as early as 1970. However, he believes that more needs to be done to relieve the problem of pollution and to protect the environment. **Love for God's creation has to be lived out in different aspects.** He became a vegetarian. **He opposes the meat production industry and believes that it brought about environmental destruction. He gave talks promoting green life and vegetarian diets, he often invites participants to experience the taste of raw food from God's creation.** He invited people to participate in a five-year plan to lead a green life by reducing waste after making a pledge. He set up the **Catholic Sustainable Garden of Joy (天主教永續樂田園)** in Yuen Long, HK to promote the love for nature through farming. In the creed, we say, "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth...". Fr. Anthony is putting his faith in practice.

For us Christians, it is a matter of respecting what the Lord has entrusted to us. In St. Paul's letter to the Romans (Chapter 8), it is the whole of creation that yearns for renewal, to be

in the light of God: "**Creation is waiting with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed.**" We sometimes forget that **salvation is promised to the whole of creation: humanity, nature, animals, various species.** Following awareness comes the idea of repairing. **How can we do this? In the Bible, reparation comes through forgiveness.** Under God's loving gaze, we acknowledge our fault and our desire, with God's grace, to change. In our faith, there is always this hope for a possibility. We are going towards a new land which, with Christ, has already begun. It is up to us to work through our choices, so that it happens.

How do I live in the time given to me? The media assure us that the longings of the heart can be satisfied by the artificial securities and delights of the consumer society. But deep down within each of us there is the hunger to love and be loved, to be listened to and to be appreciated and above all to know there is a meaning and an eternal value to our lives. The world is full of people seeking joy and happiness in the wrong ways. Only God can satisfy this longing of the heart. As said before, the beginning in the book of Genesis, through the sacrifice of the cross in the Gospels, and on to the book of Revelation, God desired to create man in his image, to give the gift of himself in an intimate relationship to the summit of his creation, the human person. But God's gift of friendship was rejected, and his creations are destroyed. The Father worked with human freedom, preparing the way to establish his reign and invite us to enter into his presence, his kingdom, once again. **The key was his Son, Jesus Christ. We enter the kingdom through the heart of Christ, a heart that suffered and died to expiate our sins and enable us to enter into a relationship with God once again.**

**How to put ecological conversion into practice looking at all around us with the eyes of God?** As Pope Francis always says **Everything is connected.** This means that **the conversion to be experienced is situated at all levels: in our relationship to space, time, nature, ourselves, others and God.** We are invited to exercise discernment: what consequences will my choices have? This process of questioning is part of the life and spiritual struggle of every Christian. **We need to deal with the relations of God's creations that include us to one another and to their physical surroundings.**