

***A talk at Mass on the Sunday following the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ***



Greetings, friends, from myself as full-time chaplain for EcoCongregation Scotland, which is the independent and *very ecumenical* movement of churches in Scotland committed to developing our relationship with the Earth and fellow creatures..... Expressed in many practical spiritual ways: reducing waste, being mindful of our environmental impact.

And in prayer, spoken, as well as embodied.

***This*** congregation has been part of the Movement for some while, and shown really impressive commitment, to which I'd like to pay tribute, and which I hope I can share with the ***rest*** of the Movement.

For the last six years, I've been visiting all sorts of churches, sharing in prayers and worship and encouraging folk to mark the **Season of Creation**. The Season is a world-wide observance which runs from what Pope Francis has now designated as the **World Day of Prayer for Creation** on September 1st, to the Feast of St Francis on October 4th.

It's a large part of my job to write, film and otherwise gather resources for churches to use during that time, whether on Sundays or in prayer groups or private devotions. Pope Francis's **Letter, Laudato Si**, -'Praise be to you' - which he wrote to **all** people of goodwill in 2015, is a **major** resource for **my** work as EcoChaplain, working with churches on Care for Creation: as an expression of faith. Of mission, witness, discipleship...

This is because right from the start, **Laudato Si** moves us on from ways of thinking, acting - *and probably praying* - which hold us back from responding both to God's goodness, and to the **damage, danger and chaos** which human beings are **knowingly choosing to continue** to inflict on fellow creatures and indeed on our own kind.

The words '**Laudato Si**' are the beginning of the Canticum of the Creatures by the Pope's namesake Saint Francis. Laudato Si means "*praise be to you*", though the **next** word is also very powerful. It's a very big word, with four letters. **W.I.T.H** With. "Praise be to you my Lord **WITH** all your creatures".

We praise God side by side **with** and not just **through** everything that has breath, and body and blood.

They're not just there **for our good**, though because they **are** there, we receive from God everything that sustains us in faith and joy and hope and love.

And they, perhaps, look to **us** to play our part. Because all of God's unified Creation, heaven and Earth, seen and not-yet-seen, is connected, interwoven, interdependent. That's a scientific **and** a Biblical truth.

We praise God all the more because in Jesus Christ, God chose to share, **Body and Blood**, in person.

The more seriously we take that teaching of the Church, that Christ is like us in every way except sin, the more profoundly we will be committed to Care for Creation.

I've been asked to pick up, in **this** talk, on this most appropriate Sunday following the *Solemnity of the most Holy Body and Blood of Christ*, a couple of verses from the appointed Psalm:

*"How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me?"*

That's a more complicated question than it might first appear. And this special Sunday gives it added depth.

The writer of the Psalm is conscious of being blessed by the goodness of God in food, drink, and indeed, in the very **breath** with which they praise God.

Likewise - where these things **are** a source of joy - for friendships partnerships and relationships, for **communities** who sustain us. **All** the communities who sustain us. Even those trees **who** give us the breath to praise with,

So we need to let the cup of our gratitude spill over a wee bit, because of God's giving **of the use** of so many good things, which, - *like the breath we breathe and the water drink* - **we receive and enjoy and pass on to sustain** fellow creatures, including human ones.

God's giving **for use**, including of the Earth is giving as a home common to an overwhelming diversity of interdependent birds, beasts, plants, and life, seen and unseen.

God gives us the Earth as a home, **not as a plaything**, and indeed Pope Francis encourages us to relate to the Earth as we would **or should** to our most beloved relatives, even as a mother, who gives us life, and for whom we also care.

The poets of the Bible discerned and celebrated these networks of dependency, which are - *believe me*- very richly acknowledged throughout the whole of Scripture.

***Jesus said: look at the flowers, birds ... an invitation made by Jesus because he was in constant contact with nature ...filled with affection and awe.***

And if you wondered, that's not just me: I'm quoting Cardinal Fernandez, Prefect of the Dicastery of the Doctrine of the faith, in a speech I heard in Assisi in March.

*“How **can** we repay the Lord for his goodness to use?”*

-Simply - in **all** we do:

- by expressing our faith, mindful that we are sustained by sharing;

-by living, accordingly, **with** a loving concern for those **with** whom we praise God. Seen **and** unseen. And trusting that this is so.