



ARCHDIOCESE
OF BRISBANE

Renewing Our Relationship with Creation in Lent 2020

Living *Laudato Si'* - An Invitation

As the sacramental ashes are placed on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday, we will not only be reminded of how we have burnt others and ourselves by the mistakes we have made, but we will be starkly reminded of the ashes which cover many parts of our country as a result of months of unprecedented bushfires, prolonged drought and dangerous climate change.

The earth in our part of the world is crying in pain under the weight of many wounds like the current spate of bushfires. It is not something isolated to Australia. When Archbishop Peter Loy Chong of Suva in Fiji visited us in Brisbane last September, he told us about the great challenges he, his people and their islands are facing because of climate change and other environmental problems in the Pacific. We simply cannot turn a blind eye to these deep and widespread cries for help.

This is the time to act for all of us who believe in Jesus Christ, God with us, who identified himself intimately with the pain and anguish of all of creation. In the face of the immense ecological challenges we face and in response to the Gospel of creation, the Holy Father invites us to what he and some of his predecessors have called an "ecological conversion". In his recent message for the World Day of Peace, he echoed the key message of his 2015 ecological encyclical, *Laudato Si'*:

The ecological conversion for which we are appealing will lead us to a new way of looking at life, as we consider the generosity of the Creator who has given us the earth and called us to share it in joy and moderation. This conversion must be understood in an integral way, as a transformation of how we relate to our sisters and brothers, to other living beings, to creation in all its rich variety and to the Creator who is the origin and source of all life. For Christians, it requires that "the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them".

Lent offers us a chance to slow down and think about how we are living our lives. That includes taking a long, hard look at how we are, directly and indirectly damaging God's creation with whose care we have been entrusted. It includes examining how we have compromised the viability of the many fragile ecosystems of plants, animals, human beings and non-living things both near and far. It requires us to see the difficulties and threats faced by the many peoples who are made vulnerable by the impacts of major environmental crises like climate change.

This Lent, you are invited to employ the traditional practices recommended to us by Jesus himself as we hear in the scriptures on Ash Wednesday. Think about how we have contributed to the ecological damage that is all around us and how we can change things for the better for ourselves, for our sisters and brothers around the world and for all of creation now and for future generations. Through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we can draw closer to God in Christ in all our relationships, including in our relationships with, as St Francis of Assisi says, our sisters and brothers, the mountains, the rainforests and the grasslands, the oceans, the rivers and streams, the great variety of plant and animal life, and our vulnerable friends in places like Fiji, the Philippines and the Torres Strait.

Along with this invitation, we will offer some resources with suggestions for prayer and contemplation, which you can incorporate into your Lenten practice, the variety of ways in which you can observe a Lenten fast and the types of giving of your resources and time which can mark your journey to Easter.

In the next few months, as we approach the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, the Archdiocese will issue resources you can use in your household, parish, school and office to continue your spiritual journey to ecological conversion. We hope they will also offer you practical steps you can undertake to respond with love to the ecological challenges we face, both locally and globally. Opportunities for learning and training for those who want to help their parish, school or office to embrace the call for renewal will also be offered later in 2020.

May we respond to the signs of our times with courage, love and generosity. As we try to enter more deeply into Christ's agony and suffering in Gethsemane and on Calvary, as we try to follow him into the uncertainty and darkness of his tomb, may we also emerge with him to a new life, ready and willing to let go of the damaging habits and neglect of our lives until now. May God open our eyes to the possibility of a new relationship with creation which is deeply rooted in the Creator's own abundant love and generosity.

From the Living *Laudato Si'* Initiative, Archdiocese of Brisbane