

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONE OR ALL OF THE SUNDAYS BETWEEN 1 SEPTEMBER- TO 4TH OF OCTOBER

1. PENITENTIAL SERVICE FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION 2018

Introduction:

O Gracious God, Creator Spirit, you have given order, light and life to the world and you have expressed delight in your creation. You commanded us to till and care for the garden. And yet, we have trampled on the beauty of your creation and neglected to keep your Word.

And so:

1. We confess that the way we live today is changing the climate of our earth, polluting oceans and rivers with plastics, and interfering with the balances of the life-systems of mother earth, and hurting the poor.

Lord, have mercy.

2. We have been exploiting the resources of our common home, stealing the birth right of future generations, and neglecting to care for creation as a gift from God to be cultivated.

Christ, have mercy.

3. We acknowledge that we have neglected to protect the biodiversity of our planet, poisoned the atmosphere with toxic gases, and failed to share the resources of the earth equitably and justly.

Lord, have mercy.

May Almighty God have mercy on us, pardon us for our sins against the integrity of creation, and inspire us to work towards a new heaven and a new earth, Amen.

2. HOMILY REFLECTIONS

Twenty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time **“Every Generous Action is a gift from God”**

The second reading today reminds us that as Christians we are called to put our faith into practice; every generous action is a gift from God. St. James speaks of the Word that is planted within each of us and through that Word we are sent out to work together for a more just world. From the 1st September until the Feast of St. Francis on October 4th Christian churches are encouraged to celebrate the Season of Creation. This is an annual celebration of prayer and action where inviting us to think more deeply about what is happening at present to the Earth and the environmental destruction which threatens our world. The theme this year is “Walking Together”. As pilgrims let us walk together to awaken again to the wonder of the Earth, our Common Home, and the web of life which it shelters.

In the Gospel Jesus tells the Pharisees that it is what comes out of a person that defiles a person, emphasising how through our actions we show what is in our heart. Let us encourage one another during this Season of Creation by praying with and for creation; encouraging small actions in our homes and parishes to try to live more sustainable lives.

‘God has written a precious book, whose letters are the multitude of created things. From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe... Alongside revelation in sacred Scripture, there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night’ (Pope Francis, Laudato Si, 85).

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time **Ephphatha**

In today’s Gospel Jesus heals a man who was deaf and who had a speech impediment, unable to hear or speak God’s word of truth. Jesus says “*Ephphatha*” which means BE OPENED. Immediately this man was healed.

During this Season of Creation we are all urged to *listen* to the cry of the earth. Scientists are now telling us that unless drastic action is taken we will lose the battle against the environmental destruction which this world is faced with. The worldwide heatwave and drought which we experienced this summer is one example of how our planet is under pressure. Yet change is possible. All it takes is one good person to restore hope. As followers of Christ we have a duty to lead the way in caring for God’s beautiful creation. What prevents us from hearing these messages? We can be cynical and say that the issue is too big, that it is up to governments to sort out.

Ephphatha! We start where we are and do what we can. This week can you encourage your family to make small changes in the home such as ensuring all waste is correctly recycled, composting, encouraging one another to use public transport or walk/cycle when possible? A very simple action is to reduce the use of

plastic by buying a reusable water bottle or coffee cup which removes so much waste from landfill and sends a powerful message. We begin with the small actions and encourage others to do the same. “*Ephphatha*”, let us all be open to this call to care for our common home.

[You can find out more at www.seasonofcreation.org]

Twenty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time ***“I, by my works, will show you my faith”***

“*What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works?*” These are the words of St. James in the second reading today and in the Gospel Jesus speaks quite sternly to Peter: “*The way you think is not God’s way but man’s...*” This is a reminder for us all to check what path we are walking. Jesus’ path was radically different to what people of his time expected of a Messiah. It was a path that would lead to much sacrifice. Being a Christian today means being counter-cultural and making sacrifices for a greater good.

As we walk together through this Season of Creation can we as parish lead by example and show our commitment to caring for the earth? The future of our environment depends on the action we take now as a society. We can be proud that in July Ireland became the first country in the world to divest from fossil fuels. This is a good news story. As parishes can we join with the eco-groups in our community to rejoice in the good gift of creation, to share eco-stories and hear other good news of what is already happening. Perhaps you can explore becoming an ‘eco-parish’? (www.ecocongregationireland.com) This is an issue that the church can link with the wider community and offer a space to dialogue and pray. The Gospel today urges us to walk God’s ways not man’s.

*“I wish to address every person living on this planet...to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home...
The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life.”
(Laudato Si 3,23)*

Twenty Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time ***How to welcome the child.***

In today’s gospel Jesus is presented as the courageous leader, instructing those who will follow on from him and carry on His work for future generations. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” Then he took a little child and said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

This September we are celebrating the Season of Creation. Pope Francis challenges us to reflect: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (Laudato Si, 160).

In the context of today's Gospel we might ask: how are we welcoming generations to come? Pope Francis urges us to remember that the goods of the earth are not meant to be exploited and states, "Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth." During this creation time let us reconnect once more with nature and restore our relationship with the environment. As parish communities we must play our part in ensuring that our world is liveable for generations to come.

"Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day." (Laudato Si, 25)

Twenty- sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Be tolerant

In the second reading from St. James today we hear of a condemnation of the rich who exploit the weak. This theme carries on to the Gospel where Jesus has harsh words for anyone who would try to bring down 'the little ones'. It is a lesson in tolerance. As we approach the end of this annual celebration of the Season of Creation let today's Gospel be a call to care for the weak and vulnerable. Through our exploitation of the earth's goods it is the poorest of the world who suffer. Let us always be conscious of our responsibility to be stewards of creation, to connect more deeply with the wondrous world around us, to take action against all that threatens our natural environment.

In a few days we celebrate the Feast of St. Francis (Oct. 4th), patron saint of ecology. Perhaps by hosting a blessing for animals, a local clean up, trying to go plastic free we can mark this special time in some way and embrace our role as stewards of creation.

"God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight. Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference, that they may love the common good, advance the weak, and care for this world in which we live. The poor and the earth are crying out." (Laudato Si, 245)

3. BIDDING PRAYERS

God, our Creator, through your love you have given us these gifts to share. Accept our offerings as an expression of our deep thanks and our concern for those in need, including our fellow creatures on planet Earth.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who live only for gain at the expense of the poor of the earth.
(Pause) **Lord, hear us.**

That immigrants and refugees may be welcomed by the people of Europe and the United States.
(Pause) **Lord, hear us.**

We pray for your creation, the whole cosmos including our common home, and the intricate balance in every part of the ecosystems that sustains life on Earth.
(pause) **Lord, hear us.**

We pray that we all might be open to listen to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the Poor, especially those people of the South who are facing the harsh reality of climate change.
(Pause) **Lord, hear us.**

Let us praise God for all living creatures both great and small and we pray especially for those creatures which are facing extinction.
(Pause) **Lord hear us.**

Let us pray that we might allow our voices to speak out when poor people are being unjustly treated and that we will also speak for the Earth when human activity is destroying our oceans and rivers.
(Pause) **Lord, hear us**

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards you infinite light.
(Pause) **Lord hear us**

Let us pray. O Lord teach us to empathise with Earth. Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation and the cries for justice from the land, the sea and the skies. Make our faith sensitive to the groans of the Spirit in creation, groans of longing for a new creation. We ask you this through Christ, the Lord, Amen.

4. POST COMMUNION REFLECTION

As a Post Communion-reflection ,either the priest or a member of the congregation could recite the "Prayer for the Earth" composed by Pope Francis at the end of his encyclical Laudato Si'.

*All-powerful God,
you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.*

*Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.*

*We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.*

5. DISMISSAL AT THE END OF MASS

Presider :

The Mass is ended,

Go in Peace to care for **our common home** and preserve the **integrity of God's creation.**