

Moral Call to Care for Creation

By Fr. Jack Schuler

As we indicated, we're celebrating today a special mass for the care of creation, along with the rest of the Catholic world at different times this month. And I don't know about you, but sometimes when I was playing a game like Monopoly or something, somebody would hit the board, the wind would blow away the money, and you cry out. Well, in the encyclical that Francis did, he said the earth is crying out because of the way it's been treated. And so it behooves us to bring thanks today for the beauty of creation, but also to recognize what's going on.

Pope Francis said that the climate crisis is a moral crisis. Not just an environmental crisis or an economic crisis, it's a moral crisis. And he said, the moral crisis and social justice are linked inseparably. And that's because when creation is damaged, those on the margins are disproportionately affected, that they suffer the most, not the wealthy. And so the crisis is also one of morality. He also called out, he and Leo also, have called out the United States because of the tremendous amount of carbon emissions that we have, and because of what they call our irresponsible lifestyles. And so global warming causes migration.

Today is World Migration and Refugee Day. And so we remember migrants who've been pushed out by global warming. The statistics that I saw for 2019 was there were 33 million people displaced, 8.4 million were displaced because of war or violence, 24.9 were displaced because of natural disasters, climate related, obviously.

And so we come today to remember what's going on in our world. Pope Francis talked about the indifference of the wealthy, the affluent. And I think paramount is our president and his billionaire friends. They don't care about our earth. They don't care about God's creation. It's more and more coal; drill, baby, drill; cut down the forest. Just this week, He revoked the carbon emissions from cars that was established by Biden. We're going to have more warming. And so we need to know what's going on and then move forward.

Just recently, it's not even translated yet, the International Theology Commission in the Vatican just put out a paper about what's called ecological sin. Ecological sin. That is, creation is damaged. It's a sin against God, against neighbor, against community, against the environment, and against future generations. And so we have this swimming in sin. You know, those that even think about sin, usually it's only in personal terms that I hurt somebody or stole something. But that's not the problem in the world. The problem is what's called social sin. The sin is in our systems, it's in our customs.

It's in our laws. And that's what has the greatest, most detrimental effect on us and on the creation.

And so social sin, probably the most prominent example, is slavery. Slavery was lawful, as were Jim Crow laws. Or the displacement of the American Indians, the genocide, or I would call ICE engaging in social sin because it's legal for them to do what they're doing, which is against the dignity of human beings. And so that whole realm of social sin comes into play. And I didn't realize this until I read a commentary that in the formula with reconciliation, and I'll just do part of it.

“Since God the Father of mercy, through the death and resurrection of His Son, has reconciled the world to Himself, sent His Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. God the Father of mercy, through the death and resurrection of His Son has reconciled the world to Himself.”

We're not just talking about forgiving a person. It's cosmic. It's the world that needs forgiveness, that needs reparation.

So we come forward, move hopefully towards a better world, or a world that has eco-justice. And eco-justice, I think, would start with crying out shrilly, we need our people to cry out about what's going on, especially standing up to those that are ruining what God created in a beautiful way. And very simply, vote against polluters, you know?

I want to turn towards a lighter move, although I just thought of Margaret Mead, a great anthropologist, once said that civilization will rise or fall on the action of a few and the inaction of the many. We need not to be inactive, because the few are doing enough on our creation.

Finally, just a word from an Eco-activist, named Jane Goodall. She did a lot of work with chimpanzees in Africa. And she said that you have a choice, the gift of life, to make the world better or not bother. Then she tells a story about a little boy in Burundi who came to her and said, “If I pick up litter every day, will that help?” She said, “Yeah. And then if you ask 10 of your friends to do the same. And then 10, that's another 10. And then something will happen.”

Great. And so that maybe we, like the gospel today, we are saying no to creation. But we have a chance to say yes, or at least maybe.