

July 16, 2023
Cycle A – 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 55:10-11

Psalm 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14

Romans 8:18-23

Matthew 13:1-23

Notes from Bishop Peter

1. As we continue to struggle with climate change, I believe it is important to examine the second reading for today's liturgy. Here it is in full, from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 8: ¹⁸"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³Not only creation but we ourselves, (as integral to creation) who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons and daughters of God and the redemption of our bodies."
 - a. Paul means that because of Adam's sin, and whose body was formed from the earth, the earth itself is in "bondage to decay." It is God who put our earth, our world into bondage and just as humans are inclined toward evil, such as pride, envy, greed and lust, so is our earth.
 - b. Examples: The pandemic that has changed our way of thinking and living; volcanic eruptions; tsunamis that have ravaged coastlines and are impossible to stop; hailstones that destroy crops and swarms of locusts too. Moreover, there are wild fires whose smoke pollutes our air and heat waves making June the hottest month ever recorded.
 - c. Then there are the results of our folly as humans that have caused climate change to the point that human life is in danger. Here is the warning Pope Francis addressed to the world in his landmark encyclical (letter) on the environment entitled *Laudato Si*: "This sister (earth) now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see

ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is **also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.** This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she groans in travail" (*Rom 8:22*). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. *Gen 2:7*); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters. (*Laudato Si' #2*)

2. Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming brought on by the actions of humankind that produce or aggravate it. It is true that there are other factors (such as volcanic activity, variations in the earth's orbit and axis, the solar cycle), yet a number of scientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity.
3. But there is hope for us who believe in God's love for us because we have been saved from an inclination to evil so we can live as sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. We can do this because Jesus has empowered us by giving us His Holy Spirit so that we can work together to confront the threat of climate change. How inspiring it is for us to be people of hope.
 - Evidently we join many others in our world who want the same thing, especially young people.
 - a. Also, at the end of time, when God's glory will burst forth from those who have permitted God to work in and through them, we shall see that same glory in all of creation that will finally be relieved of its suffering, depicted by Paul as the pains of a woman in labor.
4. The Eucharist is made of the fruits of the earth, wheat and wine. Thus, I conclude with the words of Pope Francis about the Eucharist as a sign of hope: "It is the Eucharist through which the whole of creation gives thanks to God because every Eucharist is celebrated on the "altar of the world... We know that the bread and wine are "fruit of the earth and work of human hands" that are transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. In the

bread of the Eucharist, creation is projected towards... unification with Christ himself. Accordingly the Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation.”

Amen.