



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MOTHER EARTH

Dear family

Celebrating April 22 as International Mother Earth Day means recognizing that the Earth is our home and its ecosystems provide life and sustenance throughout our existence.

It is also the day to rethink and reaffirm our responsibility to promote harmony with nature in order to achieve a fair balance between the economic, social and environmental needs of the present and future generations.

Gaylord Nelson, US senator, was its promoter with a demonstration that took place on the 22nd of April 1970, establishing this day to create a common awareness of the problems of overpopulation, the production of pollution, the conservation of biodiversity and other environmental concerns to protect the Earth.

In 2009 it was officially proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly.

Mother Earth is, therefore, the living expression that demonstrates the interdependence between human beings, other living species and the planet we all inhabit.

The United Nations Decade for Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 continues to seek to guide the efforts of Member States to prevent, stop and reverse the degradation of our habitat, in order to achieve the major objectives of the 2030 Agenda: ending poverty, protecting the planet and improving the lives and prospects of people around the world. The States have also indicated repeatedly that both the global depletion of natural resources and the rapid environmental degradation are the result of unsustainable production and consumption patterns due to their consequences adverse to the planet and to all the living beings that inhabit it: the loss of biodiversity, the desertification, climate change and the interruption of various natural cycles.

On the occasion of World Environment Day, promoted by the United Nations, Pope Francis (General Audience of June 5, 2013) launched a strong call to raise awareness, to become aware and act personally and within our community possibilities to unite efforts that help alleviate this situation of deterioration of our sister, Mother Earth... and remember that “the commitment to “Cultivate and guard” Creation, nature, is not a secondary issue in the life and mission of the Church, but is an integral part of its task of collaborating with God in making the entire Creation, the human being and all other creatures have life in abundance and walk towards plenitude...” and adds “we are living a moment of crisis; We can see it in the environment, but above all we see it in man. The human person is in danger:

This is true, the human person today is in danger; Here is the urgency of human ecology! And the danger is serious because the cause of the problem is not superficial, but deep: it is not just a matter of economics, but of ethics and anthropology.” Human ecology and environmental ecology must walk together.

In 2015, Pope Francis in the Encyclical *Laudato si'* challenged us with a strong call:

The urgent challenge of protecting our common home includes the concern of uniting the entire human family in the search for sustainable and comprehensive development, because we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us, he never backed down from his project of love, he does not regret having created us. Humanity still has the ability to collaborate to build our common house. At the same time, he recognizes, encourages and thank all those who, in the most varied sectors of human activity, are working to ensure the protection of the home we share.

Unfortunately, many efforts to seek concrete solutions to the environmental crisis tend to be frustrated not only by the rejection of the powerful, but also by the lack of interest of others. The attitudes that obstruct the paths to solutions, even among believers, range from denial of the problem to indifference, comfortable resignation or blind trust in technical solutions.

At the end of the introduction, Francis lists a series of axes that run through the entire encyclical and on which he will specially insist:

-The intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the criticism of the new paradigm and the forms of power that derive from technology, the invitation to look for other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new life style.

-“Each year hundreds of millions of tons of waste are generated. The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. (Cf. LS, 21).

-“The social exclusion, violence, drug trafficking, growing drug use by young people, are signs that the growth of the past two centuries has not always led to a real progress”. (Cf. LS, 46).

-“The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation.” (Cf. LS, n.48).

-“It is foreseeable that, once certain resources have been depleted, the scene will be set for new wars, albeit under the guise of noble claims.” (Cf. LS, 57).



Brothers and sisters, celebrating Mother Earth Day raises awareness. Being aware and raising awareness is everyone's task, to take responsibility, educate ourselves and commit to a new, more sustainable lifestyle, human and fraternal.

May this space of prayer, where we connect as a family, united in the same spirit help us prepare our hearts to renew our gaze and commitment to Mother Earth, in the care that we must provide and especially, to deepen our view and listening to the poor, the excluded and marginalized.

One of the greatest challenges of integral ecology is to understand the connections that exist between environmental crisis and the social crisis. «There are not two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but one single and complex socio-environmental crisis. We cannot separate the suffering from our common home, the cry of the earth, of the suffering of the people, especially the poorest. To hear the scream of creation we must necessarily listen to the cry of the poor, and vice versa, the cry of the poor cannot be fully understood if we do not relate it to the cry of creation. In too many countries, extremely exploited and impoverished already, entire communities are paying the price of the climate change, extreme weather events and environmental disasters. In too many cases, the Western and Northern lifestyle of the world is an accomplice in exploitation: the exaggerated consumerism causes impoverishment of entire regions of the world. The earth screams together with its people.

“Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity” (LS 240)

We invite you to listen and open your heart to this mystery.

<https://youtu.be/uQvRnfPsn6g>

Silence

Brothers and sisters: We need a conversion of heart and in our practices, because the environmental challenge that we are experiencing, and its human roots, interest and impact us all. Let's ask forgiveness for the degradation of which we humans are complicit.

Because we have contaminated the air, water, soil, clouds and even the atmosphere that surrounds us and protects us. For the desertification of our land that we have exploited, plundered and made sterile for the coming generations. Lord, have mercy.

For the suffering of so many millions of men and women who endure exclusion, misery, hunger and violence of any kind due to a predatory economic system that monopolizes its resources destroying their lands and their ways of life. Lord, have mercy.

Because we do not know how to recognize the proper value of each creature, because we continue to consider them as objects of use and dominion and we have not learnt to contemplate their beauty and be grateful for their goodness and respect their integrity. Lord, have mercy.

Because we have departed from your original design and considered ourselves masters and lords instead of administrators and collaborators in the ever fuller realization of Creation. Lord, have mercy.

Seeing so many disasters that sicken our planet and each of the inhabitants of our common home, the Word of God illuminates us to convert our lives:

WORD OF GOD

From the Gospel of Luke (Lk 10, 25-37)

And behold a certain lawyer stood up, tempting him, and saying, Master, what must I do to possess eternal life? But he said to him: What is written in the law? What is your reading of it? He replied: Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind: and your neighbour as yourself. And Jesus said to him: You have answered right: this do, and life is yours.

But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus: And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering, said: A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell in the hands of robbers; they stripped him, beat him and then made off leaving him half a priest happened to be travelling the same way: and seeing him, he passed by the other side. In the same way Levite, who came to the place and saw him, and passed by the other side. But a certain Samaritan being on his journey, came near him; and seeing him, was moved with compassion. He went up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them: and setting him upon his own beast, took him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two pence, and gave to the host, and said: Take care of him; and whatsoever you spend over and above, I will repay you on my return. Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbour to him that fell among the robbers? But he said: He that showed mercy to him. And Jesus said to him: Go, and do the same yourself.

Word of the Lord.

REFLECTION

Pope Francis' words help us reflect.

We and the poor (from the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, 67)

«The parable eloquently [that of the good Samaritan] presents the basic decision we need to make in order to rebuild our wounded world. Seeing so much pain and suffering, our only course is to imitate the Good Samaritan. Any other decision would make us either one of the robbers or one of those who walked by without showing compassion for the sufferings of the man on the roadside. The parable shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify themselves with the vulnerability of others, who reject the creation of a society of exclusion, and act instead as neighbours, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of common good. At the same time, it warns us about the attitude of those who think only of themselves and fail to shoulder the inevitable responsibilities of life as it is. »

The land and the poor (from the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, 48, 50, 51, 52)

«The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to the causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet...The impact of present imbalances is also seen in the premature death of many of the poor, in conflicts sparked by the shortage of resources, and in any number of other problems which are insufficiently represented on global agendas. » (LS 48)

«Instead of resolving the problems of the poor and thinking of how the world can be different, some can only propose a reduction in the birth rate. At times, developing countries face forms of international pressure which make economic assistance contingent on certain policies of “reproductive health”. Yet “while it is true that an unequal distribution of the population and of available resources creates obstacles to development and a sustainable use of the environment, it must nonetheless be recognized that demographic growth is fully compatible with an integral and shared development”. To blame population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some, is one way of refusing to face the issues. It is an attempt to legitimize the present model of distribution, where a minority believes that it has the right to consume in a way which can never be universalized, since the planet could not even contain the waste products of such consumption. Besides, we know that approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and “whenever food is thrown away it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor”. » (LS 50)

«Inequity affects not only individuals but entire countries; it compels us to consider an ethics of international relations. A true “ecological debt” exists, particularly between the global north and south, connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment, and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time. The export of raw materials to satisfy markets in the industrialized north has caused harm locally, as for example in mercury pollution in gold mining or sulphur dioxide pollution in copper mining. There is a pressing need to calculate the use of environmental space throughout the world for depositing gas residues which have been accumulating for two centuries... The warming caused by huge consumption on the part of some rich countries has repercussions on the poorest areas of the world, especially Africa, where a rise in temperature, together with drought, has proved devastating for farming. There is also the damage caused by the export of solid waste and toxic liquids to developing countries, and by the pollution produced by companies which operate in less developed countries in ways they could never do at home, in the countries in which they raise their capital: “We note that often the businesses which operates this way are multinationals. They do here what they would never do in developed countries or the so-called first world. Generally, after ceasing their activity and withdrawing, they leave behind great human and environmental liabilities such as unemployment, abandoned towns, the depletion of natural reserves, deforestation, the impoverishment of agriculture and local stock breeding, open pits, riven hills, polluted rivers and a handful of social works which are no longer sustainable”. » (LS 51)

«The foreign debt of poor countries has become a way of controlling them, yet this is not the case where ecological debt is concerned. In different ways, developing countries, where the most important reserves of the biosphere are found, continue to fuel the development of richer countries at the cost of their own present and future. The land of the southern poor is rich and mostly unpolluted, yet access to ownership of goods and resources for meeting vital needs is inhibited by a system of commercial relations and ownership which is structurally perverse. » (LS 52)

Abandoned on the wayside (Encyclical Letter Fratelli tutti, 63-66)

«Jesus tells the story of a man assaulted by thieves and lying injured on the wayside. Several persons passed him by, but failed to stop. These were people holding important social positions, yet lacking in real concern for the common good. They would not waste a couple of minutes caring for the injured man, or even in calling for help. Only one person stopped, approached the man and cared for him personally, even spending his own money to provide for his needs. He also gave him something that in our frenetic world we cling to tightly: he gave him his time. Certainly, he had his own plans for that day, his own needs, commitments and desires. Yet he was able to put all that aside when confronted with someone in need. Without even knowing the injured man, he saw him as deserving of his time and attention». (FT 63)

«Which of these persons do you identify with? This question, blunt as it is, is direct and incisive. Which of these characters do you resemble? We need to acknowledge that we are constantly tempted to ignore others, especially the weak. Let us admit that, for all the progress we have made, we are still “illiterate” when it comes to accompanying, caring for and supporting the frailest and vulnerable members of our developed societies. We have become accustomed to looking the other way, passing by, ignoring situations until they affect us directly». (FT 64)

«Someone is assaulted on our streets, and many hurry off as if they did not notice. People hit someone with their car and then flee the scene. Their only desire is to avoid problems; it does not matter that, through their fault, another person could die. All these are signs of an approach to life that is spreading in various and subtle ways. What is more, caught up as we are with our own needs, the sight of a person who is suffering disturbs us. It makes us uneasy, since we have no time to waste on other people's problems. These are symptoms of an unhealthy society. A society that seeks prosperity but turns its back on suffering». (FT 65)

«May we not sink to such depths! Let us look to the example of the Good Samaritan. Jesus' parable summons us to rediscover our vocation as citizens of our respective nations and of the entire world, builders of a new social bond. This summons is ever new, yet it is grounded in a fundamental law of our being: we are called to direct society to the pursuit of the common good and, with this purpose in mind, to persevere in consolidating its political and social order, its fabric of relations, its human goals. By his actions, the Good Samaritan showed that "the existence of each and every individual is deeply tied to that of others: life is not simply time that passes; life is a time for interactions" ». (FT 66)

SHARING

To think about or share in community.

There is an intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet. (LS 16)

What connections do we find between social and environmental deterioration? Can we perceive the relationship that exists between them?

How do I live my personal and community connection with the suffering of others and with Mother Earth?

How can we include in our personal and community prayer the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth?

We freely invite you to share resonances of the Gospel and the selected texts for our reflection.

PRAYER

Finally let us pray together:

We cry out to you:

Come, Holy Breath of God, poured out in the kind God, the earth and us, we cry out to You.

Together with the earth, we ask you to free us of greed, selfishness and indifference.

Together with air, water, earth and wind, we ask you to help us get rid of all contamination.



Together with the forest, the birds and the animals, give us the strength not to destroy ourselves and the delicate networks that connect our ecosystems and all life.

Along with the marginalized of society, those who are not heard, the powerless, those who fight and those who suffer, we ask you for the strength to be just, merciful and compassionate.

Together with those in power and in positions of authority, we ask you for wisdom to be good administrators of our common home.

And finally, together with all creation and peoples, we thank you for all your efforts to restore our **SISTER MOTHER EARTH. AMEN**

Bishop Allwyn D'Silva, auxiliary bishop of Bombay. Bombay, India.



Sisters and brothers Claret was a child of his time, he lived close to the reality of his people, he observed, he scrutinized and discovered “the signs of the times”; proposed solutions and committed their assets, time and energy and his peace to carry them out. May the Spirit that animated our Founder also encourage us to respond to the signs and challenges of these times.

Caring for Mother Earth in the treatment of the poorest constitutes an ethical horizon of the Comprehensive Ecology. Ecological Education is fulfilled in Ecological Spirituality, when passing from environmental information to take a leap of communion with the Mystery (Cf. LS 210)

