

Deacon Wayne duPreez

Homily 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B (14 October 2018)

Mark 10:17-30 // Hebrews 4:12-13 // Wisdom 7:7-11 // Ps 89(90)

Even before Adam Smith's ground-breaking economic book "The Wealth of Nations" was published in 1776, Britain and British thinkers enjoyed a solid and growing reputation for having a very advanced understanding of and enlightened approach towards wealth – both wealth creation and wealth ownership.

It was our own William Wilberforce allied with like minds to spearhead the challenge and eventual abolition of Slavery in Britain and the Empire in 1833, ending an era of accepting the notion that one human being could buy, own and sell other human beings. And it was British parliamentarians who from the middle of the last century, critically re-examined and questioned the premise of imperialism, and its claim that colonial powers like Britain could own and harvest the natural wealth of her colonies at the expense of indigenous peoples – which ultimately lead to independence and autonomy for many countries in the developing world.

So we, in the United Kingdom, are arguably better placed than many others, to recognise the value and appreciate the wisdom of Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical Laudato Si – "On care for our common home".

Laudato Si is a sincere appeal from the Holy Father to each and every person living on our planet to stop and reflect on how we respect and protect the created world around us – both currently and going forward into the future. Pope Francis boldly encourages us to re-appreciate the beauty and fine balance of God's magnificent handiwork around us, that has been given to us so freely and generously.

And Laudato Si is a timely invitation to us all to undergo an ecological conversion, and challenge ourselves to adopt, where we can, a simpler lifestyle, a less materialistic lifestyle that results in fewer adverse consequences for our planet.

And as today's Gospel Reading illustrates so well, there are very real and profound spiritual benefits that result from detaching ourselves from the ceaseless pursuit of material ownership and excessive wealth accumulation. Jesus demonstrates in a very gentle, but principled way that our Christian vocation involves so much more than following a single set of "do's" and "do not's" with the aim of seeking favour with God. The Church teaches us that there are three other equally important relationships that we need to work on with sincere hearts in addition to our personal relationship with God.

There is our relationship with other human beings, clarified so eloquently in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

There is our relationship with ourself encompassing our self-identity and self esteem, which is receiving welcome attention and publicity these days in our increasingly open conversations around anxiety, addictions, and mental health and well-being.

And finally, there is our relationship with the created world around us, which can no longer be ignored or overlooked. Laudato Si shines a spotlight onto our use and potential exploitation of finite earthly resources and the negative consequences to the rest of humanity in our globally connected, inter-dependent, co-reliant planet.

It is not, as some critics would have us believe, a socialist blueprint from a Marxist Pope – that much is quickly clear from its emphasis not on wealth redistribution between the haves and have nots of one generation, but on the Divine and undeniable truth that we are born into this world owning nothing and we leave this world owning nothing.

Deacon Wayne duPreez

In reinforcing that none of our material possessions has any benefit whatsoever to us in the after-life, Laudato Si reminds us that our God-given inheritance of the earth along with all created things is not about ownership at all, but instead has everything to do with stewardship – sensible management that recognises not only fair consumption for the benefit of all peoples that share our home with us, but also requires responsible custodianship for the benefit of future generations to come after us.

If you have not already done so, I do highly recommend that you get hold of a good summary of Laudato Si, which is easily available at no cost from the internet, and become better acquainted with this exciting, topical and very modern extension of the Church's teaching on the Catholic approach to solidarity and sustainability.

No doubt you will come away asking yourself "What can I do?" "How can I make a difference?"

At Holy Innocents', we are fortunate to have a fantastic history of supporting fair trade and socially responsible initiatives, and that commitment continues undiminished.

The Justice and Peace Group is a collection of friendly and welcoming parishioners here in our Parish who are quietly dedicated to promoting Pope Francis's vision in very practical and surprisingly diverse ways. I would encourage you to take a closer look at what they're up to, and seriously consider becoming involved in one or more of their initiatives, many of which are easily achievable with little or no extra demands on our valuable time.

This week has been specially set aside for us to reflect on committing ourselves more closely to the principle of "Living Simply", which is highlighted in Laudato Si.

Some recent successful "Living Simply" projects at Holy Innocents' include our collaboration with the charity called "Tools with a Mission" to collect, refurbish and distribute much needed tools to village communities in the developing world, and making a real difference to the lives and livelihoods of people there.

With your help, we also recently collected and recycled over 170 pairs of unwanted spectacles to people in developing countries who don't enjoy the same ready access to opticians and sight-enhancing aids that we can easily take for granted in the UK.

Through our strengthening relationship with CAFOD, the Catholic charity For Overseas Development, we continually support sustainable international development programmes and already have nearly 50 parishioners signed up to the "Eating Simply for One Day a Month" initiative, including me. We are also collaborating very closely with Holy Innocents' Primary School on a Food Waste Awareness Project, as well as working to restore some allotments on the school grounds which will be used for growing fruits and vegetables with the eager involvement of the youngsters.

On Friday the 12th, several parishioners joined with other churches in Orpington at a public meeting at which politicians, including Orpington MP Jo Johnson and representatives from a range of Christian organisations, debated how we should accept responsibility for climate change, a subject highlighted earlier this week by international Scientists and experts gathered in South Korea. Friday's event was entitled "Green Christianity for a Fragile Planet", and Russell or Ann Brockett or any one of the other parishioners who attended the event would be happy to answer any questions you might have in this regard.

There are two more very worthwhile events coming up in the week ahead, which I would strongly encourage you to support.

On Thursday the 18th of this month, a short 30 minute film will be screened in St Joseph's Hall at 8pm. Entitled "Global Healing", it is sponsored by the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, and will be used

Deacon Wayne duPreez

as a basis for meditation, reflection and prayer during the evening. Please do make an effort to attend if you can – details are also included in this week's Parish Notices.

In addition, we will be supporting the CAFOD Family Fast Day on Friday the 19th of October, in a tangible demonstration of solidarity with our brothers and sisters throughout the world who do not have enough to eat, by foregoing a main meal, or some other similar personal gesture. The money that we save by doing so should be placed in the envelopes attached to this week's newsletter, and offered up at next week's collection.

At the same time, the first quarterly collection will be due for all those who have already joined the Eating Simply scheme – for anyone who hasn't already signed up and would like to do so, please contact Russell Brockett who will supply you with envelopes to be used each quarter. Or you are welcome to leave your contact details with me to pass on to him, or get Russell's details directly from me after Mass.

Thank you for your support to Russell and to our Justice and Peace Group here at Holy Innocents' – My prayer in the coming week is that our Lord's loving gaze may fall on each and every one of us, not out of sorrow for our hesitation, but in joy at our response to cultivating a just and righteous relationship with all of God's creation.