

32<sup>nd</sup> Sun (B)

7<sup>th</sup> November 2021

‘Praised be You, my Lord, through our sister, Mother Earth’

1Kings 17: *the widow made a little scone* Ps 145: *my soul, give praise to the Lord* Heb 9: *Christ offers Himself to take on the faults of many*  
Mk 12:38–44: *the poor widow has put in more than all.*

Famine ... and poverty ... and yet living through those awful difficulties with the most profound generosity — that’s what we’ve heard of, today, in two accounts of poor widows, one in the days of Elijah, and one in the days of Jesus. The widow in Zarephath (1<sup>st</sup> Reading), though terribly short of grain and oil, is willing to share with the prophet the limited food she had to feed herself and her son. And in the Gospel, Our Lord is astonished to see the poor widow with just two small coins put them *both* into the Temple treasury — her very last penny — as an expression of her immense generosity to, and trust in, God. Dealing with famine and poverty is, of course, something that has not left us in the 2900 (2000) years since Elijah’s (Jesus’s) day, and perhaps we often feel limited in what we could possibly achieve on our own in the face of such huge and global problems. But these widows show that, however, little we feel is our individual impact, we still

need to exercise that generosity of spirit ... to do what we can. Maybe it’s a cliché, but “Every little counts”!

As we reach the mid-point of the CoP26 Climate Conference fortnight that our country is privileged to be hosting in Glasgow — and in connection with the great demonstrations across the world, and in London & Glasgow — maybe it’s good to review our own commitment in faith to caring for creation, and to combatting various elements that could contribute in the long term to more famine and more poverty. Though sometimes the climate-change message comes across as a very doom-laden one, specifically designed to create fear, yet it is right to listen attentively to climatologists as they make their scientific assessments of global warming, and to respond generously, positively, and with hope.

Let’s think first of the apostles experiencing Our Lord’s powerful command of the natural elements — calming the storm on Lake Galilee, for example — they began to know Him more truly as the true God, as the Lord of Creation itself. Jesus calmed the wind and waves with

the briefest of commands, and whatever the apostles' estimation of Jesus initially, they came to know Him to be the very same One who had created the natural world. We profess every Sunday in the Creed that God is the "Maker of all things, visible and invisible" — and then we profess the Son of the God to be Him "through whom all things were made." This beautiful natural world, earth, that we have as home, is a gift of the Creator God to His beloved human creation. Humanity is the pinnacle of creation, the high-point of God's plan, and although our fall from grace can manifest itself as greed — and hence the misuse of the world's natural resources — yet we remain most beloved of the Lord, and not some pest that has merely 'damaged' the earth's ecosystem. This is an important principle. We are the *solution*, not the problem — even though some of the problems are of our own making. But our ingenuity, our incredible God-made reason and creativity, is the source of how we can, with generous co-operation with one another, overcome the challenges of climate change. To do that, we need to overcome the sinfulness of greed,

division, and pride, and to promote a simplicity and brotherly care on a global scale. The pandemic has shown that global co-operation is possible, though often fraught with difficulties, and needs the whole world to help contribute peacefully. It is, at least, an encouragement, that 120 nations' leaders gathered in Glasgow last weekend to initiate the CoP26 Conference. This is a surely a great starting-point for the ongoing discussions last week and this coming week. We pray that they may be blessed with success.

In 2015 Pope Francis addressed the huge issue of our stewardship of the world, "care for our common home," in his [Encyclical Letter](#), *Laudato Si'*. Much was made of the Pope's comments on climate change, though of course he didn't go any further than good current science indicates. But the Pope's concerns are more for the poor, for the better care for our worldly home so as to benefit humanity more justly — all her children. The title of the Encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, is taken from the opening words of St Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Creatures*,

written back in 1225, a year before his death. One of the verses of his sacred poem runs:

*Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother  
Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces  
various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.*

St Francis reflects in his *Canticle* the harmony of man with Nature, for we are part of that great act of God's kindness, even though we are also its most special part, set above it by God. But we are set above it to be its guardian and not its abuser. Sadly, too often, we have chosen through greed and laziness, instead, to be the world's abuser.

In our attempts to carers of our environment, I expect we already try each to do our bit, don't we? We are obliged nowadays to recycle much of our waste, to use low-energy lightbulbs, to insulate our homes well ... And I am sure that we all do our best to waste as little water as possible, not to throw away too much food, and to seek out the 'FairTrade' label on supermarket items. These would all seem to be good Christian attitudes to the conservation of our environment. The world given us by God is a gift, and we should use that gift well, and not in wasteful or

indifferent ways. But we must also remember that the gift is given to all humanity, and we have a duty to do our best to see that the world's resources are equitably shared. This may often seem a colossal task, given the centuries of greed that have made many inequalities almost set in stone. But, like those widows of Scripture reaching for the little they had in order to share it, we too must each and every one of us contribute our bit to the effort to live sustainably, to live simply, and to live so that others can also live!

The Pope calls on us to renew our vision of the earth as our "common home" — the home for all humanity — and to be reminded that it is, first and foremost, God's own Creation. He urges us to live simply, not to grab and grasp, but to give thanks for what we have and to be content with less. The Pope believes that many of the world's ills — the scourge of abortion; the ravaging of the ecology; lamely blaming 'overpopulation'; the lack of political will to deal with world hunger; the abandonment of many of the elderly in our society to loneliness — are all interlinked, in human sins of rebellion against the Creator.

Let me leave the word to Pope Francis himself (*Laudato Si'*, n. 13), a paragraph he entitles, 'My Appeal':

*The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home. Here I want to recognize, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of the home which we share. Particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world's poorest. Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded.*

As Catholics, believers in the goodness of God's creation, let's be among those who hope, pray, and work in our own little way for that change, for a respect and care for the earth and all who live in it. Let's keep closely in our prayers in this 2<sup>nd</sup> crucial week of CoP26 the many national delegations, and their leaders, whose political will needs to be harnessed and integrated, in order for a new global care to be effected. God help them and bless us all to be truly generous, thoughtful, stewards of God's beautiful world.