

Fourth Sunday of the Season of Creation

September 24, 2023

Sister Clare Carr, OSB shares a reflection on the scripture readings: Isaiah 55:6-9; Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a; Matthew 20:1-16a

Isaiah sets the stage for our readings today. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.”

God has given us this planet with abundant beauty, intricacy, and lavish goodness. It is a space of a myriad of species, a blue planet that espouses life and fullness. Yet we co-creators of this planet are abusing her daily. We are exploiting more resources in a few months than the Earth can replenish in a year.

The central belief of our Catholic Social teaching is the Earth is God’s and everything in it. Creation as we know it is a gift from God to all people and all creatures. This is a gift that provides for the needs of all for survival, growth, and flourishing.

This is difficult to say, but the right to private property is not absolute. We sisters live on 100 acres that once were enjoyed by the Utes. How can we share it? To accumulate and cling to more than one needs while others live in desperate poverty is a serious sin against creation and the Creator. We in this capitalistic country know such great richness. We can be generous, but is that generosity taken from our surplus, not from our needs.

If any of you have seen the nature programs on PBS each week you know that climate change is real and the result of greed and accumulation. It is built on the notion that we possess our resources instead of stewarding them.

Pope Francis says, “Economic policies that promote scandalous wealth for a privileged few and degrading conditions for many others, spell the end of peace and justice.”

What can we do? How can we heal our Earth? Where do we hear the cry of the poor? How can we practice nonviolence? One of our sisters prays daily, for those who are affected by climate change, forced migration and racism.

Pope Francis calls us to “sustainable production and consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any activity harmful to the planet and the people...”

God’s ways are not our ways. The Gospel for today speaks of a generous God to all those who are in his care. Jesus is about the Kingdom, a kingdom that is available to all regardless of when we turn to God. Like the man crucified next to Jesus who professed his faith at the last hour or, like many of us, a full life of fidelity. Each is to receive the same reward, the same gracious wage, so to speak. And for those of us who have known this compassionate Jesus for years, we recognize the many graces received. We have been anointed with grace, hope, and sufficiency.

Thank God, God’s ways are not our ways.