

*All praise be Yours, my God, through Sister Water.
So useful, humble, precious and pure.*

St Francis of Assisi *Canticle of the Creatures*



ECOLOGICAL COMMITMENT & FOLLOWING JESUS

Making the connection between ecological commitment and Jesus of Nazareth is at the centre of Christian ecological theology. This connection is not something that can be taken for granted. It is far from obvious to many people that ecology has anything to do with Jesus. Numbers of Christians who are deeply committed to ecology find it easy enough to see their commitment in relation to God as Creator, but they cannot see a connection with the story of Jesus.

According to the Gospel tradition, Jesus embodies the compassion of God in his person, his words and his actions. He offers healing and hope to those suffering illness and exclusion. He brings liberation and joy to those suffering imprisoned by psychological bonds. He invites women as well as men into the circle of his followers to form a new family of sisters and brothers. He interprets God's gift of the *Torah* in terms of compassion. He announces forgiveness for sinners ...

Through the ages, Christian saints and sages have recognised that this divine compassion does not stop with human beings. Paul told the first Christian community in Rome that the whole creation awaits redemption in Christ (Rom 8:19-24). At the end of the second century Irenaeus saw the whole of creation recapitulated (summed up and transformed) in Christ and as destined to share in Christ's victory over death. In the thirteenth century, Francis of Assisi showed how the divine compassion embodied in Jesus reaches out to embrace individual animals and birds

as brothers and sisters to us before God. In the early twentieth century, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin came to see the whole of evolutionary history as empowered by the risen Christ, the Omega who is the source and goal of the whole emergent process.

Christians who reflect on Jesus today, from the perspective of the twenty-first century, do so as participants in a human community engaged in the extinction of uncounted species of living creatures. This context challenges us to think again about the compassion of God revealed in Christ and its relationship to the nonhuman creatures of our global community.

Rev Denis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith* (New York: Orbis 2006). 48-50

God is a bright ocean that distils and reveals hidden truths so that my soul has a better understanding of how to trust Love, and this water is a mirror in which You Eternal Trinity give me knowledge
Catherine of Siena

industrial waste and destructive fishing methods, especially those using cyanide and dynamite. It is aggravated by the rise in temperature of the oceans. All of this helps us to see that every intervention in nature can have consequences which are not immediately evident, and that certain ways of exploiting resources prove costly in terms of degradation which ultimately reaches the ocean bed itself. n 41

From Laudato Si'

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis quotes from a Pastoral Letter from the Bishops' Conference of the Philippines who asked: "Who turned the *wonderworld of the seas into underwater cemeteries bereft of colour and life?*" He then continues: This phenomenon is due largely to pollution which reaches the sea as the result of deforestation, agricultural monocultures,

PLASTIC WASTE IS INCREASING

The currents of the oceans carry plastic waste around the world. *Clean Up Australia Day* commenced 32 years ago by Ian Kiernan, a business man and yachtsman who was shocked by the waste he saw in the many oceans he sailed. It continues today by Pip Kiernan and a team of people.

SOME FACTS

Clean Up Australia estimates that about 130,000 tonnes of Australian plastics ends up in our waterways and oceans each year. These will eventually wash up on the beaches of our neighbouring countries.

The Rubbish Report from Clean Up Australia reveals that plastic waste has increased each year, with research indicating that it will rise further in 2021 as a direct outcome of the pandemic.

TURNING A LENTEN PLASTICS FAST INTO A PLEDGE

If you are considering a Lenten fast from some of the single use plastics, you might like to consider turning this into a year long pledge. For example, a pledge not to use plastic straws or single use plastic bags for supermarket fruit and vegetables. Choose something that you can continue.



Northern Beaches Council

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY 7 MARCH

Go to www.cleanup.org.au to find out more, to join a local team, start your own team, or to simply use 7 March as a day to do a small clean up in your local neighbourhood.



Today ... we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*

Laudato Si' 49



The Waters of Baptism

The Sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life. Through our worship of God, we are invited to embrace the world on a different plane. Water, oil, fire and colours are taken up in all their symbolic power and incorporated in our act of praise. The hand that blesses is an instrument of God's love and a reflection of the closeness of Jesus Christ, who came to accompany us on the journey of life. Water poured over the body of a child in Baptism is a sign of new life. Encountering God does not mean fleeing from this world or turning our back on nature. *Laudato Si'* n235

A Reflection

Thirst is one of the greatest human needs. It is only when we are without a drink in extreme situations that we remember how searing thirst actually is. For those who inhabit desert areas, water is life. Out in the desert thirst burns into the body. To be without water here is to perish.

Metaphorically, thirst functions as a profound metaphor for spiritual need. It is a constant theme in the Bible. *Like as the deer yearns for the running streams so does my soul yearn for you my God.* (Psalm 42). Time and again, there is the image of the stream in dry land, an image of refreshment and the return of the flow of life. Take away water, and the land hardens and splits. It is when one visits the tormented, braised ground of Palestine, the land of the Bible, that one can understand how water is life. Where there is no water, everything is scorched. Where there is water, everything is green and flourishing. Water is the difference between life and death.

John O'Donohue, *The Four Elements* (Ireland:Transworld 2010). 50-51

Consider also the grand spectacle of the sea, robing herself in different colours, like garments: sometimes green, and that in so many shades, sometimes purple, sometimes blue.

St Augustine, *The City of God*