

**Annual Archdiocesan Caritas, Justice & Peace Mass,  
St Columba's, Edinburgh. World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation (Feast  
of St Giles), 01 September 2020**

**Homily of Archbishop Leo Cushley of St Andrews & Edinburgh**

*My dear friends,*

I'm very grateful to Father Basil, our Vicar Episcopal for Justice and Peace, Fr Tony, Fr Kevin, Sr Karin, Deacon John and to all you who have come here or who are joining us online for this celebration of Mass. Today in this diocese, it also happens to be the Feast of Giles, the Patron Saint of Edinburgh, so this is a double celebration for all of us here in the city.

More particularly, in union with the whole Church, today we join the Holy Father celebrating the *World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation*, an event which begins the *Season of Creation*. In the spirit of the times in which we live, he urges us to pray and work for an increased awareness of creation, to learn again to respect it, and to support work that will do that.

Creation, and the respectful and intelligent treatment of it, is an authentic part of our world view as disciples of Jesus. Our acknowledgement of the good gift that Creation represents is something very deep, something very ancient in the Judeo-Christian view of the whole cosmos, and specifically of the world we inhabit.

The Bible starts with the account of creation, we would say, naturally enough. And the Book of Genesis is one of the most important and easily one of the most beautiful and accessible of all the books of sacred scripture. We see the loving will of God, and His intention to give light and life to us and to many other creatures. And we learn from it that God saw all that He had made, and indeed, it was very good.

We see humanity in the midst of what God creates, in union and in harmony with everything around them. And we see how God has created us in His own image and likeness – not to make us proud, not to let us do as we please, but so that we can love Him and serve Him – and indeed serve His Creation. And that dignity confers a duty upon us. God *entrusts* the world to us, not for our pleasure and satisfaction, not to behave in a possessive and domineering way, but in a spirit after His own heart.

We know that the Spirit of God is creative, not destructive. For us to behave authentically, then, as human beings, in the image and likeness of God, we are

to care for and to respect God's creation, in a way analogous to the Creator, who lovingly has called all of it into being.

As never before, our generation is in the enviable position of being able to see what we do to the planet by our activity. And as never before, our generation is able to perceive the important choices that are being placed before us as time goes by. As a species, we are capable of much that is good and helpful. But we also do much that is not.

The care of creation – whether you're a believer or not – is then a question of enlightened self-interest; but for a Christian, it also forms part of our duty, of our responsibility for something entrusted to us for a time, and which ultimately is not ours. St Paul, writing to Timothy says, "We bring nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it". This is surely the right attitude towards the world – one of detachment, of humility, of a sense that none of it actually belongs to us. There is nothing we did not receive from someone else; and ultimately, everything is a gift from God. If we are anything, we are merely stewards. Our response as Christians, then, is to give thanks to God for His great gifts, to learn our modest place in all of creation, and to take up the grave responsibility of stewardship for all that has been entrusted to us.

As we join our Holy Father in this Season of Creation, let's give thanks for all God's blessings – of light, of life, of love, of each other, and of his many gifts to us; and let's take up our duties to our world and to each other, to the glory of God the Creator.