

‘THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND BAPTISM’
FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD ~ 12TH JANUARY 2020



Pietro Perugino c. 1482 | Baptism of Christ | Sistine Chapel – edited www.stjosephsbrackenridge.com

BEGINNING THE NEW YEAR WITH HOPE

Pope Francis in his [**Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See**](#) last week itemized areas of concern in the world.

He began his address by speaking of the need for *hope*.

*‘A new year is opening before us;
like the cry of a newborn baby, it fills us with joy and hope.
I would like that word, “hope”, which is an essential virtue for Christians,
to inspire our way of approaching the times that lie ahead.*

Certainly, hope has to be realistic.

*It demands acknowledging
the many troubling issues confronting our world
and the challenges lurking on the horizon.
It requires that problems be called by their name
and the courage be found to resolve them.
It urges us to keep in mind that our human family is scarred and wounded
by a succession of increasingly destructive wars
that especially affect the poor and those most vulnerable.*

*Sadly, the new year does not seem to be marked by encouraging signs,
as much as by heightened tensions and acts of violence.
Precisely in light of these situations, we cannot give up hope.*

And hope requires courage.

*It means acknowledging that evil, suffering and death will not have the last word,
and that even the most complex questions can and must be faced and resolved.*

For hope is

*“the virtue that inspires us and keeps us moving forward,
even when obstacles seem insurmountable”.’*

THE CATHOLIC LEADER ARTICLE ON BRACKEN RIDGE TO BLACKALL VISIT

This week's [The Catholic Leader](#) carries [an article on Blackall Tambo Parish and the visit of parish members to Blackall.](#)

We pray for Blackall Tambo as they continue to suffer from the very serious impact of drought on the communities and the land.

POPE FRANCIS & CLIMATE CHANGE

Among the issues Pope Francis named in his [January Address to the Diplomatic Corps](#), were climate change and ecological conversion.

'Sadly, the urgency of this ecological conversion seems not to have been grasped by international politics, where the response to the problems raised by global issues such as climate change remains very weak and a source of grave concern. The XXV Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25), held in Madrid last December, raises serious concern about the will of the international community to confront with wisdom and effectiveness the phenomenon of global warming, which demands a collective response capable of placing the common good over particular interests.'

With hope and courage, we seek

'a collective response capable of placing the common good over particular interests'

AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE & CLIMATE CHANGE

Turning to the [Australian Academy of Science](#), we heard on January 10th their ['Statement regarding Australian Bushfires'](#)

'As a nation, we must deal with extreme weather events more effectively than we currently do.

As such events become more frequent and severe, we must adapt Australia and Australians accordingly, as well as strengthen mitigation efforts.

Bushfires, along with other weather and climate challenges, pose complex and wide-ranging problems. Population growth, climate change, temperature extremes, droughts, storms, wind and floods are intersecting in ways that are difficult to untangle and address.

The good news is that there is already abundant evidence available to help us understand the environment we live in and to design and build the future we want for Australia.

There has never been a more important time to draw on that scientific evidence base to help guide Australia's short- and long-term responses to the devastating bushfires ravaging our nation and that are causing uncertainty about our future.'

In addition to 'the immediate and essential need to rebuild and recover',

the Academy highlights several ways forward, including

‘Everything, including urban planning; building standards; habitat restoration; biodiversity and species preservation; and land, water and wildlife management will need careful and measured consideration.

We must further improve our ability to forecast changing environmental threats and continually improve climate modelling predictions. We must improve our understanding of fire behaviour and other adverse weather events, and we must continually develop new technologies, practices and behaviours to assist our nation to respond and adapt to, manage, and mitigate against such extreme events.

All the while, Australia must take stronger action as its part of the worldwide commitment to limit global warming to 1.5° C above the long-term average to reduce the worst impacts of climate change.

To have the best chance of succeeding, we must draw on all the available evidence and knowledge, including working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and undertaking further research where it will have the most benefit.’

The recent *Australian Government, Bureau of Meteorology Annual Climate Statement 2019* is available [here](#)

The *Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)* information on climate adaptation is available [here](#)

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 3:13-17

The Gospel Reading is about the baptism of Jesus.

Note how John the Baptist doesn’t feel worthy to baptize Jesus.

In fact, John states his need to be baptized by Jesus.

John agrees only after Jesus assures him that

‘it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness’

Righteousness includes social justice but is much wider in meaning.

It centres on our relationship with God and God’s will.

Jesus empowers John to baptize him.

Jesus also empowers us to care for our neighbour and for creation.

‘Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.

John would have prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’

But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.’ Then he consented.

And when Jesus had been baptized,

*just as he came up from the water,
suddenly the heavens were opened to him
and he saw the Spirit of God
descending like a dove and alighting on him.
And a voice from heaven said,
‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’*

THE WORDS OF GOD

We recall the words of God:

‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased’.

OUR COMMITMENT

Like John the Baptist, we are called to do our part in God’s plan.

In planning our responses to climate change, we draw on the insights of Scripture, on the Church’s environmental teaching including *‘Laudato Si’ – On Care for Our Common Home*, and the experience and knowledge of all people, including the many disciplines of science.

Concerning our influence on climate change, and other issues, Pope Francis reminds us

*‘that even the most complex questions
can and must be faced and resolved.
For hope is
“the virtue that inspires us and keeps us moving forward,
even when obstacles seem insurmountable”.’*

EMPOWERED THROUGH OUR BAPTISM TO BE DISCIPLES OF JESUS

*Empowered through our baptism to be disciples of Jesus,
we love God and our neighbour,
and the earth, our common home.*

*Empowered through our baptism to be disciples of Jesus,
we have a duty to live responsibly and care for our world.*

*Empowered through our baptism to be disciples of Jesus,
we have a central mission to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.*

We are called to face the problems and challenges in our world today.

As Pope Francis reminded us

*‘Certainly, hope has to be realistic.
It demands acknowledging
the many troubling issues confronting our world
and the challenges lurking on the horizon.
It requires that problems be called by their name
and the courage be found to resolve them.’*

PEOPLE OF HOPE & COURAGE

As *people of hope and courage*, willing to acknowledge the issues and challenges, and imbued with the Holy Spirit, let us respond together to the grave issues of climate change today.

Mindful of the devastating bushfires in Australia, we now pray our parish prayer *'PRAYER DURING FIRE & DROUGHT'*.

Amen.

Fr Gerry

[Readings: <https://universalis.com/Australia/20200112/mass.htm>]

Click on image for printable version of this prayer

