

‘THE GOSPEL & A RESPONSIBLE CARING FOR CREATION’

5th Sunday Ordinary Time Year C – 10th February 2019

INTRODUCTION

This is the second homily on our Christian mission in general and for responsibly caring for creation, in particular.

Last week we reflected on the health and issues of three large water environments:

The **Irrawaddy River** in Myanmar,

and the **Murray-Darling Basin** and the **Great Artesian Basin** in Australia.

We linked to some status reports and church statements on them.

We reflected on the Gospel passage and the relationship

between our overall mission in Jesus, and of the human trials in our advocacy for creation.

Thank you for the feedback after each Mass last weekend, and the requests to speak more about Christians caring for creation.

After our reflection on the Gospel, Luke 5:1-11

we have excerpts from **two environment** documents

1. **2002 Australian Catholic Church teaching ([‘A New Earth – An Environmental Challenge’](#))**
2. **1991 United States Catholic Church teaching ([‘An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching - A Pastoral Statement of the United States Catholic Conference’ November 14, 1991](#))**

GOSPEL OF LUKE 5:1-11

Today in the Gospel, we are invited to follow Jesus and not to be afraid.

Such a peaceful setting – the lake of Gennesaret.

Jesus begins to form the Christian community.

He is preaching, sharing the Word of God.

Simon hears his words.

Jesus uses Simon’s boat so that he can sit down and preach to the crowd gathered.

And it raises a question for us.

WHAT DOES GOD WISH TO USE OF OURS, EITHER TEMPORARILY OR PERMANENTLY, SO THAT THE WORD OF GOD MAY BE HEARD?

Jesus had seen two boats by the shore of the lake.

As we know, we need to care for and maintain what we use for work.

The fishermen not only catch fish and sell the fish,

they also need to mend and wash their fishing nets.

In today’s Gospel they are washing their nets.

The Gospel continues.

Jesus invites them to put out into deep water.

We remember the times when God calls us to put out,

not into the shallows, but to trust God and put out into deep waters.

We can think of excuses, even good excuses like Simon's excuse.
It takes trust in God to put out into the deep again.
It involves working for the Kingdom of God.
The boat later became a Christian symbol for church,
where we put out into the deep together.

*'When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon,
 '**Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.'**
Simon answered,
'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing.
Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.'
When they had done this,
they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.
So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them.
And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.'*

Jesus has shown them, and us, the need for working together,
for sharing responsibility and workload,
and taking in a catch bigger than we could expect.
Simon realizes just how incredible this grace is.
He knows that he is not worthy.
and in honesty, he responds to Jesus.

And we ask ourselves:

DO WE REALIZE HOW INCREDIBLE GOD'S GRACE IS WITHIN OUR LIVES?
WHEN ARE WE COMPLETELY HONEST IN OUR PRAYER TO GOD?

The group shares their amazement.

And we ask ourselves:

WHEN DO WE SHARE OUR AMAZEMENT AT THE WORK OF GOD'S GRACE?

*'But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees,
saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!'
For he and all who were with him were amazed
at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John,
sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.'*

Simon is called and commissioned.
Those with him also followed Jesus.

*'Then Jesus said to Simon,
 '**Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.'**
When they had brought their boats to shore,
they left everything and followed him.'*

The call to care for creation is part of our mission in Jesus.

The quotes below help us to **form a framework for that mission.**

Both documents predate the key teaching [Laudato Si' – On Care for Our Common Home'](#), by Pope Francis in 2015.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS STATEMENT 2002

We all are needed in caring for creation.

The 2002 Australian Catholic Bishops in the Social Justice Sunday Statement

['A New Earth - The Environmental Challenge'](#) named some of the ways to be involved.

'Action is needed on many fronts.

The principle of subsidiarity suggests that responsibility for decision-making and action should be kept as close as possible

to those most directly affected by a decision or a policy.

Individuals, community groups, governments at all levels,

businesses and faith communities all have roles to play.

Politicians and public servants can do much to protect

and rejuvenate our ecosystems and natural resources.

Stronger environmental protection legislation,

accelerated research into safe and renewable energy sources,

further education in ecological responsibility,

programs to address pressing environmental issues such as global warming,

land clearing, salination and the sustainable management of natural resources are

all needed.

Retraining and new employment opportunities are needed

for workers displaced by such changes.

When we vote in local, state or federal elections,

individuals and community groups can encourage, support and challenge governments

by assessing the environmental policies of the different candidates.

Consumers and traders can promote environmentally healthy practices

by exercising their right of choice and advising a business of the reason for their decision.

Shareholders, too, should use their votes responsibly

on corporate resolutions and the election of board members.

Those in leadership and managerial roles,

from family firms to transnational corporations, are encouraged

to demonstrate ethical business practices and good corporate governance.

...Catholic parents, as the primary teachers of their children,

can help them discover the wonders of nature.

Catholic parishes, schools, dioceses and organisations have an essential role to play.

They are challenged to be examples of best practice in ecological stewardship.'

This Australian Catholic Social Justice teaching reminded us in 2002

of the interconnection between **creation, personal choices and structural analysis.**

And our **intergenerational responsibility.**

'Our personal choices -recycling, waste avoidance, composting, tree planting, car-pooling, prudent water and energy use-are important, but to achieve authentic sustainability, our personal actions must be reflected in the way in which economic and political systems are structured.

As Christians we are challenged to analyse the social structures that force millions to live in squalor, burdened by crippling debt, while a tiny minority accumulate vast wealth from exploiting earth's resources. Structural changes will often need an international framework, but our responsibility for one another is not only international, it is also intergenerational -we have a sacred duty to ensure that the world that future generations inherit continues to reflect the glory of God. Our concept of the common good goes beyond any country or generation.'

The teaching stressed,

- in justice our task is urgent,
- faithful responsibility of stewardship of God's gifts
- being reconciled with creation,
- and a conversion of heart needed.

'In justice, it is an urgent task for Christians today to be reconciled with all creation, and to undertake faithfully our responsibility of stewardship of God's gifts. To achieve such reconciliation, we must examine our lives and acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God's creation through our actions and our failure to act. We need to experience a conversion, or change of heart.'

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC BISHOPS STATEMENT 1991

Before the statement above, the USA Catholic Bishops in **1991** issued ['An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching A Pastoral Statement of the United States Catholic Conference' November 14, 1991.](#)

*This statement provided **six goals:***

- 1. to highlight the ethical dimensions of the environmental crisis;*
- 2. to link questions of ecology and poverty, environment and development;*
- 3. to stand with working men and women and poor and disadvantaged persons, whose lives are often impacted by ecological abuse and tradeoffs between environment and development;*
- 4. to promote a vision of a just and sustainable world community;*
- 5. to invite the Catholic community and men and women of good will to reflect more deeply on the religious dimensions of this topic; and*
- 6. to begin a broader conversation on the potential contribution of the Church to environmental questions.*

It provided several integral dimensions of **ecological responsibility**:

- *‘a God-centered and sacramental view of the universe, which grounds human accountability for the fate of the earth;*
- *a consistent respect for human life, which extends to respect for all creation;*
- *a worldview affirming the ethical significance of global interdependence and the common good;*
- *an ethics of solidarity promoting cooperation and a just structure of sharing in the world community;*
- *an understanding of the universal purpose of created things, which requires equitable use of the earth's resources;*
- *an option for the poor, which gives passion to the quest for an equitable and sustainable world;*
- *a conception of authentic development, which offers a direction for progress that respects human dignity and the limits of material growth.’*

The USA Bishops spoke of the **need to live in balance**:

‘The task set before us is unprecedented, intricate, complex. No single solution will be adequate to the task. To live in balance with the finite resources of the planet, we need an unfamiliar blend of restraint and innovation. We shall be required to be genuine stewards of nature and thereby co-creators of a new human world. This will require both new attitudes and new actions.’

The US Church teaching **identified tasks for various groups**.

It addressed scientists, environmentalists, economists, other experts, teachers, educators, parents, theologians, scripture scholars, ethicists, business leaders, representatives of workers, members of our Church, environmental advocates, policy makers, public officials and citizens.

- *‘We ask scientists, environmentalists, economists, and other experts to continue to help us understand the challenges we face and the steps we need to take. Faith is not a substitute for facts; the more we know about the problems we face, the better we can respond.’*
- *We invite teachers and educators to emphasize, in their classrooms and curricula, a love for God's creation, a respect for nature, and a commitment to practices and behavior that bring these attitudes into the daily lives of their students and themselves.*
- *We remind parents that they are the first and principal teachers of children. It is from parents that children will learn love of the earth and delight in nature. It is at home that they develop the habits of self-control, concern, and care that lie at the heart of environmental morality.*

- *We call on theologians, scripture scholars, and ethicists to help explore, deepen, and advance the insights of our Catholic tradition and its relation to the environment and other religious perspectives on these matters. We especially call upon Catholic scholars to explore the relationship between this tradition's emphasis upon the dignity of the human person and our responsibility to care for all of God's creation.*
- *We ask business leaders and representatives of workers to make the protection of our common environment a central concern in their activities and to collaborate for the common good and the protection of the earth. We especially encourage pastors and parish leaders to give greater attention to the extent and urgency of the environmental crisis in preaching, teaching, pastoral outreach, and action, at the parish level and through ecumenical cooperation in the local community.*
- *We ask the members of our Church to examine our life-styles, behaviors, and policies –individually and institutionally–to see how we contribute to the destruction or neglect of the environment and how we might assist in its protection and restoration. We also urge celebrants and liturgy committees to incorporate themes into prayer and worship that emphasize our responsibility to protect all of God's creation and to organize prayerful celebrations of creation on feast days honoring St. Francis and St. Isidore.*
- *We ask environmental advocates to join us in building bridges between the quest for justice and the pursuit of peace and concern for the earth. We ask that the poor and vulnerable at home and abroad be accorded a special and urgent priority in all efforts to care for our environment.*
- *We urge policy makers and public officials to focus more directly on the ethical dimensions of environmental policy and on its relation to development, to seek the common good, and to resist short-term pressures in order to meet our long-term responsibility to future generations. At the very minimum, we need food and energy policies that are socially just, environmentally benign, and economically efficient.*
- *As citizens, each of us needs to participate in this debate over how our nation best protects our ecological heritage, limits pollution, allocates environmental costs, and plans for the future. We need to use our voices and votes to shape a nation more committed to the universal common good and an ethic of environmental solidarity.*
- *All of us need both a spiritual and a practical vision of stewardship and co-creation that guides our choices as consumers, citizens, and workers. We need, in the now familiar phrase, to "think globally and act locally," finding the ways in our own situation to express a broader ethic of genuine solidarity.'*

CONCLUSION

We remember the symbols.

The **fishing boat** became a symbol of Christian community in motion as people **work together** pulling the oars, fishing and maintaining the boat and nets. We use a **sail** in the boat as the wind directs us (a symbol of the Holy Spirit). The **nets** are the ways we share the Good News and invite people to come and follow Jesus.

But if there is no water in the lake, the boat won't move.
If we abuse the lake and it becomes too salty, there will be no fish to catch.

We need to care for the water and the air and soil and other elements of our common home.

From the two Australian and US Catholic Teachings above, we highlight

- We need to **live in balance**.
- We need to name our **goals** and identify the various **tasks** involved.
- We need to name the **dimensions** of our ecological responsibility.
- We need to reflect on our **personal choices**.
- We need an **analysis** of the structures involved.
- We have an intergenerational responsibility.

There are many levels of **actions** needed.

We need to mend the nets, wash the nets, repair the sail when needed.
We need to care for each other,
to look after the boat and keep up our strength.
We need to care for each other and for our common home.

Having reflected on the Gospel of Luke 5:1-11
and on two important church teachings
about our responsibility for caring for creation,
let us put out our boat into the deep.
Let us move from the shoreline,
out into the deep where God often calls us to be.

Let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/021019.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook10022019>]