**Homily – 1st Sept 2024 – 22nd Sun Year B – Season of Creation**

**+ Martin Hayes, Bishop of Kilmore and IEC Laudato Si’ Coordinator.**

Our Gospel this morning calls us to be people of the heart, to be genuine and sincere in all our actions. Jesus warns us against just paying ***lip-service*** to the guidelines that have emerged from our relationship with God. Above all, we are called to acknowledge God as God, as our Creator, as the Creator of all of life. ‘*We are not God’* as Pope Francis says in Laudato Si’ (67) on care for our Common Home. In this time of the Season of Creation it is our opportunity to be thankful for God’s creation, for the delicate and interlocking set of relationships of which we are part. That’s what the Season of Creation is about: about coming to see our world as it is. It’s about expressing our gratitude that there will be breakfast for us tomorrow and about doing what we can to ensure that there will be breakfast also for everyone else in our world.

Indeed, in our second reading from St James today, we are reminded that the good and the perfect are given us ***from above***, by God, our Creator. St James uses earthy images to illustrate that ***the Word of God is planted in us***, that we are children of God called to be the ***first fruits*** of all that has been created. We have a particular calling of stewardship and responsibility for creation. We hear from St James the challenge to look after ***the widow and the orphan***, that is, the poor. We must realise that the impact of climate change caused by our Western world has an impact on peoples in the developing world, the cry of the earth is the cry of the poor (LS)

We are called to recognise that we are creatures of God, made in the image and likeness of God, given the task of stewardship of creation, called to account for the responsibility that this stewardship entails. It means caring for all of life, human from the moment of conception and for all natural life – it means being prolife in the widest definition of that term.

Our first reading from the Book of Deuteronomy speaks of the Lord God as being ***very near*** and we are called to take account of ‘***the laws and customs’*** that have emerged from our relationship with God. It means praying and discerning to come to an understanding and an appreciation of the wisdom of such principles. We are called to ‘***add nothing’*** and to ‘***take nothing away***’ from what God has given us as guidelines.

We are invited to tune into the rhythm of creation, the seasons, the growth and flowering, the new life, the bearing fruit, and the colouring and decay to be the source of new life. In this Season of Creation beginning today until 4th October, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi we are called **to hope and act with creation** – to get in touch with creation and to appreciate its struggles today due to the impact of climate change.

Pope Francis in his message for today highlights that we are not relating to the Earth as a gift from God, rather as a resource to be consumed, bought and sold. He uses the reality of the pain of a mother giving birth to a baby, to illustrate how new life emerges. We must struggle with each other, with all of creation to ensure a Home for future generations, our young people.

How can we embrace new life, tune into the struggle of creation? I invite you to look to the resources for the Season of Creation on the Irish Bishops’ website which include, *a Season of Creation 2024 Prayer, a Biodiversity Leaflet with suggestions for parishes, schools and homes in accord with a Return to Nature, Reflections for an Ecological Rosary with the Luminous Mysteries, details for a Creation Walk similar to that at Knock as well as suggestions for Tree Planting and Blessing of Pets on the Feast of St. Francis on October 4th 2024 plus a variety of appropriate rituals, meditations and prayer services.*

We give thanks for our own Kilmore Care of Creation Group, an ecumenical group who are responsible for initiatives like our biodiversity spaces to the left of the Cathedral and in the grounds of our neighbouring Church of Ireland across the road. We are encouraging all parishes to put aside 30% of their grounds to cultivate biodiversity. **Why create such spaces of biodiversity and wildflowers, leave the church grounds go wild?** To provide a sanctuary for the bees and butterflies who are responsible for pollination and reproducing life, our food and who are threatened with increasing levels of extinction due to pollution and a warming climate.

Once again, in this Season of Creation, we are invited to tune into the rhythm of nature, believe in creation as a manifestation of God’s beauty and goodness, care and providing for us. Enter the gift of creation, participate in the struggle of creation in the hope of new life.