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Transcript of Homily

Mass to launch the Season of Creation

1 September 2023 World Day of Prayer for Creation

Our report card on most of Jesus' commands, most of the things he asks us to do in our relationships with one another and the way that we live our lives, we probably get an end result of "Tries hard, could do better."

There's one of Jesus' commands, that hadn't occurred to me until I was looking at the Gospel for today, that we do exceptionally well on. "Don't worry about tomorrow," says Jesus at the end of today's Gospel – "Don't worry about tomorrow, tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

We are over performers in not worrying about tomorrow, in kicking the can down the road. We see that especially as we look at what's happening around us in our world in the creation that we are part of and that has been entrusted to our care.

Every day there is a new story of deep concern about the consequences that are happening right now. Not just things that might happen in the future; we're seeing right now the consequences of what we've done over the last generations, of what we've generations of not worrying about tomorrow. We're in *the tomorrow* already which so many people didn't worry about. As we see the extreme heat in Europe this last Summer that's just finished for them; the frequency and severity of storms; think of the floods around our own part of the world at the end of last year.

Bushfires raging in a many parts of the world; Greece and Hawaii most recently, out of control they're so intense.

The intense and continuing pollution that effects our waterways and our air, and the chronic failure to make serious inroads on the targets that we've set ourselves for reducing carbon emissions. The increasing rate at which species are lost, both plants and animals. We really are doing well on the "Don't worry about tomorrow" front."

But of course, like most of what Jesus says, you've got to look at the whole context of what he is saying; picking little bits out and using them as quotes on their own, ends up distorting what the bible says. In that text, Jesus is responding to people about the times when we are so concerned about our own needs, that we forget about everything around us. He says, remember, the world is bigger than just you; look at the birds in the sky, look at the flowers in the fields, God cares for all of these things. All of these things are part of God's good creation and cared for as part of God's good creation. Don't centre your concerns just on yourself, or your immediate needs. Don't get so obsessed with your own needs for tomorrow. Think more broadly about the way that God cares for each of us, but also for the whole of creation. Our needs, our cares fit in that much bigger picture.

Part of an integral whole that Pope Francis has spoken to us about again and again in *Laudato Si'*. This common home that we share as part of a creation in which we are held together by our relationships with each other, our relationships with all living things that surround us that we rely on, and in which we find our place.

So yes, our needs, our concerns for tomorrow matter, but so too do things that are needed for the birds in the sky and the flowers in the field.

As we're increasingly aware, if we don't care for the needs of all the life of God's creation, we won't be able to meet the individual needs that we have, or the needs that our community has, or that any of those have.

So, that's been Pope Francis' message again and again, since he published that extraordinary encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which has captured the imagination of people throughout the world, religious and non-religious alike.

In his message which he's issued for this year's launch of the Season of Creation, he invites us to join that river of justice and peace which is needed in our world, by transforming our hearts, transforming our lifestyles, and transforming our public policies.

So, thinking about our hearts. He says there are two things to think of. First, transforming our hearts in terms of the way that we understand ourselves, where we see ourselves sitting in creation, in God's world. So often we tend to think of ourselves in terms of our own needs, as an individual, or just in terms of those around us. And we think of the creation that surrounds us as something to meet our needs, to be exploited. He says we need to think about the whole of creation as God's precious and sacred gift to us, entrusted to us to care for by God and to be cared for and cherished, Not as an object to be exploited.

So, transforming the way that we understand ourselves and our world.

Then transforming our relationships with God, with our neighbours. Pope Francis reminds us of this, especially when we are thinking about the resources and the capacity of our creation, we need to think not only about those who are around us now, but about those who will come after us in the generations of the future. Creation is not just for us, it's for all of God's people both now and into the generations of the future.

Transforming our relationships with nature, with nature that surrounds us.

Transforming our lifestyles by the obvious things that we return to again and again. Reducing our consumption, increasing the way that we recycle and reuse the resources that we draw on; improving our production processes, so that they are clean and sustainable in terms of thinking of the goods of nature, but also, so that they are not exploiting others.

Justice in the way that we use the resources of the earth is also intertwined with justice for people and the way that we live our lives. Those two aspects of justice are two aspects of the one thing. So, our production processes need to respect both parts of that, the impact that we have on our environment and also the impact we have on those involved in gathering those resources and who are part of the production process.

In terms of policy, Pope Francis points particularly to the transition that is needed from fossil fuels, and the obligation and the responsibility that he sees especially on richer nations like ourselves, to lead a rapid and equitable transition from fossil fuels. Recognising the disproportionate way that nations like ours have benefitted from those and the opportunities that they've given over the generations – that's not only sensible, in terms of caring for those resources that we are going to keep on needing, it's also about bringing justice for those who have less resources than us and justice for those generations that will come after us.

So, all of that, those three challenges of transforming our hearts, transforming our lifestyles, transforming our public policies can all feel a bit overwhelming. There's a lot to do, there's a lot still to be done.

So, Pope Francis concludes his message for this year, by encouraging us to renew our hope, encouraging us to remember that we need 'Mighty Rivers', both in terms of the actual rivers and in terms of a river of justice and peace. Rivers that are powerful enough to wash away obstacles that stand in their path as mighty rivers can be, as we saw so dramatically in this part of the world at the end of last year.

While we can be tempted to say, "All this is too much; this is too hard," he reminds us that the mightiest of rivers, starts up in the high country with tiny trickles of water that couldn't wash away any obstacles. They couldn't create any new riverbeds, but eventually those trickles come together in creeks, streams, tributaries and, eventually, into the rivers that are so overwhelming for us in the power that they bring.

It's the same with the river of justice and peace that we speak of in the theme for this year's Season of Creation. That river of justice and peace, that we need to be so powerful, will flow powerfully only if each of us is committed to an action that produces our own trickles, that feed into that bigger river. And if we encourage others around us to do the same.

That is what does lie in our hands. That's what we can do and can continue to do.

Together, we can continue and renew our commitment to contribute to our common home by being more and more caring for it and renewing all of creation, by building a future in which the whole of creation shares in that justice and peace that is so desperately needed, and that God pours out on us and asks us to pass on.