

But we will only have a right judgement in these things if we are rooted and grounded in Christ, so that by following his commandments by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the original image of God which was in us, but which has been defaced by sin, will be progressively re-established. We have the hope that eventually Isaiah's prophecy will come true and the whole of creation will live in harmony with:

“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and a little child shall lead them. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11: 6,9).



FAITH Praying and believing ON THE EARTH

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

According to the Book of Genesis, God having made us in his own image and likeness, allows us to have a share in his own creativity. He has given us the world to care for; it provides us with food, clothing and all the necessities of life as well as beauty and recreation, and we have the task, not only of not spoiling it, but also of helping it to become what God intends it to be. But unfortunately, since the beginning, mankind has had the tendency to use nature for its own selfish purposes, and in so doing has destroyed the equilibrium. Instead of becoming a more beautiful place, the world has become polluted and often threatens to destroy our lives rather than make them richer.

It is not that we should aim at preserving nature exactly as it has always been; growth involves change. Surely it is right that mankind should try to eliminate diseases like malaria which is the biggest killer in the world, and to control floods and droughts, for God himself has given us the knowledge and ability to do so. The Lord says in the Gospels that we must use our talents and trade with them, not bury them or wrap them up in a napkin. With the best will in the world we will sometimes be mistaken and make wrong decisions, but we hope

‘FAITH ON THE EARTH’ Holy Cross Series FE9C
Holy Cross Convent, Rempstone Hall, Nr Loughborough, LE12 6RG

that they are not irremediable and we may learn wisdom and gain a great insight into the marvellous way in which all parts of creation depend upon each other.

How, then, can we best play our part in caring for the world and helping to restore the whole of the material universe to the state which God wills for it?

If we take our Lord Jesus Christ as our example and look at his life on earth and his attitude towards nature, we cannot help but be struck by the sympathy which he shows for all forms of life. Many of his parables and illustrations are drawn from nature: the sower, the lilies of the field, the sparrows, none of which is forgotten in God's sight. His sympathy, however, has nothing sentimental about it. He seems to take for granted that man is lord of the universe. He subdues the winds and the waves when the disciples are in danger, he feeds the hungry crowds in the desert, he turns water into wine at the wedding at Cana. But none of the miracles were for his own benefit; he would not change stones into bread for himself when he was fasting in the desert. He seems to be saying that nature is and should be subordinate to man, but at the same time man must have great respect and reverence for nature and not use it purely to satisfy his own selfish greed.

Does this help us to see the attitude that we should take towards creation? that we are allowed to use everything on earth but that we must use it in such a way that the balance of nature is not lost? Ultimately the earth is the Lord's and we only hold it in trust for him.

We hold it in trust until God's plan has been fulfilled. But as we are all aware, we have been unable to do this satisfactorily. We are divided among ourselves as to how to manage the world. We fight against each other; we do not know how to co-operate with God in

his plan; we do not know what his will is. Because of this God sent his Son Jesus Christ to be born as a man on earth so that he could reveal to us God's will in his commandments. And his commandments are these: first that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, and, second, that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. Loving God implies knowing him, - how can one love someone whom one does not know? But how do we come to know God? If we love Jesus, we love the Father also and we can know Jesus who makes himself present to us through the Holy Spirit. We can know Jesus and come to love him in the sacraments of the Church, especially Holy Communion, in private prayer and public worship and in his Word expressed in the Bible or through preaching and books. Christ is also present in our neighbour and in all the wonders and beauty of nature. By seeking Jesus through these channels we shall be led into an ever-deepening relationship of love towards him. As love has the tendency to make the lover and the beloved think alike we shall gradually find ourselves having the mind of Christ and therefore begin to act in the ways in which he would act. We shall therefore be able to love our neighbour because as St John says "*We can be sure that we love God's children, if we love God himself, and do what he has commanded us.*" (1 John 5: 2.)

So it seems that the only way in which we can participate freely in God's plan for the world is to seek God through our Lord Jesus Christ, to know and love him, so that his Spirit may work in us and give us the gifts of true wisdom, discernment and self control. Then we shall know what ought to be done and have the strength to do it. Various people in the past have spoken out against the abuses of nature and eventually their message has been heard and acted upon. It is up to all of us to be as well informed as possible and to speak out or act if we feel that decisions are being made which are contrary to the harmony and peace of the world.