



Diocese of Plymouth
From the Office of the Bishop

Pastoral Letter for the weekend of 22/23 May 2021 – Pentecost Sunday

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In a few weeks' time the G7 meeting of world leaders will take place at Carbis Bay in Cornwall. One of the key themes of that gathering is the Environment. This Pentecost Sunday we do well to remember God's creation at this challenging time and to pray with the Psalmist:

“Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth”.

As missionary disciples, we are invited to be part of the redeeming work of Christ, renewed daily through the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are to approach our mission with joy and gratitude remembering, as Pope Francis reminds us, “Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise.” (*Laudato Si'* #12). Our world, God's creation, is a precious gift to us. It is our common home entrusted to each generation. We may ask ourselves; how do we honour this precious gift? Are we really demonstrating love, care, and respect for our common home?

We are acutely aware of the damage that continues to be inflicted on the Earth, and the repercussions for the well-being of our brothers and sisters, both here in our own countries and, more especially, in the poorest countries of our world. Pope Francis and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI have both taught us that everything is interconnected and interdependent. The urgency of the situation, and the enormity of the challenges we face, have spurred many of us bishops in England, Wales and Scotland, to speak about the role that the Catholic Church and our faith must play in our shared care for God's gift to us.

For all too long we have either been ignorant of, or ignored, the systematic exploitation of our planet and the unsustainable consumption of its resources. While accepting the crucial need and demand for energy for the benefit of the poorest of our brothers and sisters, the provision of our energy must, nonetheless, be by means which radically reduce the use of carbon-based fuels.

In our political thinking, there must be a new global understanding of our world, where nations recognise our common responsibility for the dignity of all people and their rights to sustainable livelihoods, in authentic freedom. Pope Francis invites us

to look beyond our own needs to the needs of all, most especially the poor and the marginalised.

We cannot leave the healing of our common home and the well-being and care of our brothers and sisters merely to a response from industry and governments. Our own local concern and action is necessary and has far-reaching consequences. We know this very well here in the South-West. We know the impact we humans have on our rural and coastal areas. We know the importance of open spaces, gardens and fields in urban settings. We have all experienced the challenge of regular severe weather events.

We all have a part to play in the routines, choices and decisions of our everyday lives and our aspirations for the future. The actions of parishes, families, schools, and individuals will have a significant impact on our efforts to restore our common home. There are now many resources, freely available, to advise us on our choice of food, saving of water and electricity, suggestions about travel, waste, and re-use. These are measures that everyone can employ, to some degree, with minimal inconvenience and change. They are effective ways in which we can each reaffirm our personal vocation to be stewards of God's creation.

This Pentecost comes at a time of remarkable challenge and opportunity. We are gradually emerging from the tragedies and restrictions of the pandemic. We have the ability to make changes. In all our human endeavours, we need the presence of the Holy Spirit. Let us keep this Feast with that enduring hope that we can begin to repair the damage we have done and provide a healthy home for future generations. We can do so because Jesus Christ continues to breathe the Holy Spirit over us, as we, in our turn, continuously pray, "Come Holy Spirit, renew the face of the earth."

As for the G7 leaders, we hope that they will enjoy the beauty of our Diocese and, having spent some days here, will go on to work more diligently for the care of our common home. For ourselves, we pray for the courage to participate in a renewed faith in Jesus Christ, so that we may care for our common home with greater love for all that the Lord has created and Praise Him in all that we behold.

"How many are your works, O Lord.
The earth is full of your riches."

Pray for me.

Yours devotedly,

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Rt Rev Mark O'Toole
Bishop of Plymouth