

Presentation of the Holy Father's Message for 2023 Celebration of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation

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Greetings to esteemed clergy and distinguished visitors in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

We are grateful indeed to His Holiness for these powerful words and support for the Season of Creation

Let Justice and peace flow like a river. On every side we hear of the impact of climate change. Some rivers have dried up, young women and girls must walk further and further distances to fetch water, leaving them too tired to concentrate at school, putting them at risk of sexual harassment as they walk in the dark in areas they do not know.

Other rivers have become raging torrents, carrying away homes, schools, churches, and roads. Families mourn lost ones; some cannot lay their loved ones to rest as the bodies are never found.

Other rivers are clogged with plastic, industrial waste, and acid from the mines.

The waters that God created to teem with living creatures are now teeming with death and disease. So bad is the crisis that many are led into despair.

But we are a resurrection people, we believe that you must go down into the deepest tomb to find new life. We are not mourners at the deathbed of creation, we are midwives at the birth of a renewed earth.

The Season of Creation is one such sign of hope and renewal, where the family of the Church, united, comes together in prayer, lament and actions of stubborn hope. An ecumenical team have prepared the celebration guide for this year's Season.

This year's theme "Let justice and peace flow like a river" shows us the way to act.

For too long the faith communities have stood by and watched the destruction of Creation and ignored the cries of our neighbours impacted by climate change. Even Creation itself we read in Rom 8 :19 is standing on tiptoe waiting for the children of God to be revealed!

But now at last, we are seeing a river begin to rise, a river which can become a torrent which can move the mountain of climate change.

We know that a river begins with countless rain drops – separated, tiny and seemingly with miniscule value. These are our individual actions – to carshare, to change our diet, to save water, to recycle – some may despair saying these actions are too small, too meaningless to make a difference.

Our beloved Archbishop Tutu said – its these little bits of good when put together that overwhelm the world.

It is only when the drops come together to form small trickles, maybe the green team at your church or eco-club at your school, your emerging Diocesan ecological plan, that we begin to make a difference – we join with others in the community, and a small patch of forest is saved, a bus route is restarted, a campaign for the local supermarket to ban plastic bags is successful.

Those small trickles become rivers, it is said that individual actions do not bring about transformative change, but networked actions do – we begin to form movements, Laudato si, Green Anglicans, Fridays for Future, these are movements that can bring transformation. These movements can push for divestment from fossil fuels for a halt on new oil and gas explorations, for loss and damage funds to be set up. The Green Anglicans Movement of Kenya for example has just committed to planting 2 million trees per year!

But if those rivers of faithful people caring for creation and working for climate justice decide to stand apart –to flow separately – then we will not see this beautiful blue planet transformed and renewed.

Today God is calling us to work together in humility and love, to join hands so that the rivers can flow together, to become a mighty river of justice and peace, a river of worship and prayer, of lament and tears, of actions and stubborn hope - and then in the power of the mighty Spirit of God we will see the face of the Earth renewed for the sake of our children and children's children.