



# SEASON OF CREATION

## **Caring for Our Common Home: Liturgy Resources**

"Weekly *Laudato Si'* themes for bulletins and homilists."

### **Homily Helps, Petitions, and Bulletin Notices for the 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle C (2 October 2016)**

#### **Homily Helps**

##### Comment for the day:

In the book of the prophet Habakkuk, its ancient author expresses with brutal honesty the experience and emotions of his community. He doesn't gloss over destruction and violence but names them and gives voice to the feelings of anger, bitterness and despair experienced by his people. Do we, as religious, clergy or lay leaders in our Church – all called through our baptism to be contemporary prophets in our world – have the courage to follow the lead of Habakkuk? Many of us live in a rather sheltered environment where we do not experience the connection between malnutrition, political instability, violence and severe droughts exacerbated by climate change. We are not grappling with the problem of environmental refugees. Nonetheless, we are a Catholic—that is universal—Church, so it may be appropriate to give expression in a homily to the voices from the peripheries. For too many fellow Catholics sitting in the pews on Sunday, refugees are looked upon with fear and contempt, as lepers were in the time of St. Francis of Assisi. An attached additional resource highlights the connection between extreme weather, the violence in Syria, and the refugee problem. It can help the homilist to contextualize a contemporary cry of despair in the midst of so much injustice and destruction.

At the same time, our first reading also affirms hope as it speaks about the vision that, though delayed, still presses on to fulfillment. Living out of a sense of hope is an intrinsic part of being a Christian. Do we have hope vis-à-vis the daunting environmental crisis? Is it based in something more than the naive optimism that future technological developments will save us? In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis beautifully articulates the vision of a restoration, healing and peace as being rooted in the Eucharist. Why not share with others a little bit of that profound understanding by including in a homily a phrase or two from Pope Francis? (see the quote #236).

In 2 Timothy, St. Paul tells us not to give in to a spirit of cowardice. Likewise, in his 2015 address to the World Meeting of Popular Movements, Pope Francis spoke of cowardice in defending Mother Earth as being a grave sin. A little bit of self-examination may be warranted here. Do we shy away from getting more seriously involved in the issues of environmental justice out of fear of alienating some people? In such cases, voicing an open-ended question can get people to examine their assumptions with entailing direct confrontation. Another homiletic approach here could be simply telling a story – your own or that of someone else in your congregation – in which a new appreciation of the gift God's creation and concern for people on the margins have been "stirred into flame." What

set you on fire? A documentary, a sobering statistic about the state of our fragile planet, a personal encounter? Tell the story so that others may be inspired.

Today's Gospel passage begins with the disciples' pleading that Jesus increase their faith. It concludes, not with some great theological insight, but with a call to humble service. How could one interpret that passage in our own communities today? In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis stresses that green technology could help address our environmental problems, but only if combined with insight and a genuine concern especially for those in developing nations. (See the "Passages from *Laudato Si'* to note" below.) That would be a real service.

#### Scripture passages to note:

**Habakkuk 1,2:** Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and clamorous discord... Then the LORD answered me and said: Write down the vision clearly... For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint.

**2 Timothy 1:** I remind you, to stir into flame the gift of God that you have... For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control.

**Luke 17:** "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you... 'Put on your apron and wait on me...'"

#### Passages from *Laudato Si'* to note:

The spiral of self-destruction engulfs us... I have attempted to take stock of our present situation pointing to the cracks in the planet that we inhabit as well as to the profoundly human causes of environmental degradation." (#163).

For new models of progress to arise, there is a need to change "models of global development"... It is not enough to balance, in the medium term, the protection of nature with financial gain, or the preservation of the environment with progress. **Halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster.** Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress. A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress. (#194)

Taking advantage of abundant solar energy will require the establishment of mechanisms and subsidies which allow developing countries access to technology transfer, technical assistance and financial resources, but in a way which respects their concrete situations... The costs of this would be low, compared to the risks of climate change. In any event, these are primarily ethical decisions, rooted in solidarity between all peoples. (#172)

It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation. The Lord comes not from above, but from within, he comes that we might find him in this world of ours. In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living center of the universe... Indeed the Eucharist is itself an act of cosmic love... The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation... In the bread of the Eucharist, "creation is projected towards divinization, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself". Thus, the Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation. (#236)

### **Related Prayers of the Faithful**

Option 1: For the refugees around the world fleeing extreme droughts, floods, hunger, political instability and violence, may the Eucharist provide us with a vision of hope and empower us care for the poor and the earth, let us pray to the Lord...

Option 2: For our Church that, in the face of our common home being pillaged, laid waste and harmed with impunity, we would not succumb to the grave sin of being cowards in defending our Mother Earth; let us pray to the Lord....

*(The text of this petition is based on a direct quote from Pope Francis. See the suggested bulletin quotes below)*

### Sample Bulletin Notice

***"Perhaps the most important task facing us today, is to defend Mother Earth. Our common home is being pillaged, laid waste and harmed with impunity. Cowardice in defending it is a grave sin."*** A quote from Pope Francis' Speech at World Meeting of Popular Movements, Bolivia, July 2015.

<http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-speech-at-world-meeting-of-popular-mo>

***"Tal vez la más importante tarea que debemos asumir hoy, es defender la Madre Tierra. La casa común de todos nosotros está siendo saqueada, devastada, vejada impunemente. La cobardía en su defensa es un pecado grave."*** Discurso del papa Francisco ante los movimientos populares en Santa Cruz, Bolivia, Julio 2015

<http://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2015/07/10/discurso-del-papa-francisco-ante-los-movimientos-populares-en-santa-cruz-bolivia>

### Further Resources for the Homilist

Webpage: <http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/preaching-resources>

Feedback: [hello@catholicclimatemovement.global](mailto:hello@catholicclimatemovement.global)



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## Addendum:

### Syria: A Case Study of Climate Change Fomenting

While the acute crisis in Syria rightfully commands our attention today, at some point policymakers will need to recognize and address the root causes of this and other conflicts to avoid the tragic repetition in the future. Climate change is one of those causes. Current and retired US military leaders identify climate change as a “threat multiplier.”<sup>i</sup> The Syrian crisis is one such manifestation, as well as a grave harbinger of the future if climate change is not addressed urgently through rapid reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions and resources to prepare for and mitigate its impacts, particularly for vulnerable populations.

#### **Over 800,000 Syrians have lost their entire livelihoods as a result of unprecedented droughts<sup>ii</sup>**

From 2006-2011, up to 60% of Syria’s land experienced “the worst long-term drought and most severe set of crop failures since agricultural civilizations began in the Fertile Crescent many millennia ago.”<sup>iii</sup> Since 2007, rains in northern Syria have been 30-40 percent of their normal levels.<sup>iv</sup> Greenhouse-induced climate change has caused greater warming patterns around the Mediterranean, contributing to an increase in droughts.<sup>v</sup> If current rates of global greenhouse gas emissions continue, yields of rainfed crops in Syria may decline by up to 57 percent in the coming decades.”<sup>vi</sup>



In some areas, crop failures reached 75%.<sup>vii</sup> Herders in the northeastern region of Syria lost around 85% of their livestock.<sup>viii</sup> Over 800,000 Syrians have lost their entire livelihood as a result of this unprecedented drought, man-made desertification and lack of irrigation. Up to 60 percent of Syria's land and 1.3 million people (of a population of 22 million) have been affected.<sup>ix</sup> Syrian villages located in the Fertile Crescent – the birthplace of agriculture – which had been continuously farmed for 8000 years, have been abandoned.<sup>x</sup>

#### **Mass migrations from rural villages to urban centers fomented unrest**

The sheer number of impoverished, angry farmers provided the perfect fuel for uprisings, as crime and hunger created tensions with the government. Syrian Representative to the UNFAO, Abdullah Bin Yehia, asked the US government for funding to assist 15,000 small-holding farmers in northeast Syria stricken by drought, to prevent social unrest. He told US government officials that the Syrian Minister of Agriculture stated that the economic and social fallout from the drought is “beyond our capacity as a country to deal with.”<sup>xi</sup>



“So tens of thousands of frightened, angry, hungry and impoverished former farmers flooded constituted a ‘tinder’ that was ready to catch fire. The spark was struck on March 15, 2011 when a relatively small group gathered in the town of Daraa to protest against government failure to help them. Instead of meeting with the protestors and at least hearing their complaints, the government cracked down on them as subversives.”<sup>xii</sup> Riots broke out all over the country, and approximately 100,000 people

have thus far been killed in a conflict without a resolution in the foreseeable future.

Aspirations for a thriving peaceable future for the human family must include a global commitment to address climate disruption by reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and meaningful funding that enables human societies to prepare for, build resilience to, and address its impacts.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/02/climate-change-is-threat-multiplier-87338.html>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/appeals/09/MDRSY001eu2.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://thinkprogress.org/romm/2012/03/03/437051/syria-climate-change-drought-and-social-unrest/?mobile=nc>

<sup>iv</sup> <http://grist.org/food/2010-01-15-drought-drives-middle-eastern-peppers/>

<sup>v</sup> [http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2011/20111027\\_drought.html](http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2011/20111027_drought.html)

<sup>vi</sup> <http://climateandsecurity.org/2013/01/10/prepared-remarks-on-global-food-and-climate-security/>

<sup>vii</sup> [http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/2011/en/bgdocs/Erian\\_Katlan\\_&\\_Babah\\_2010.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/2011/en/bgdocs/Erian_Katlan_&_Babah_2010.pdf), p. 15.

<sup>viii</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/11/15/us-climate-syria-idUSTRE6AE2BT20101115>

<sup>ix</sup> <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/appeals/09/MDRSY001eu2.pdf>

<sup>x</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/14/world/middleeast/14syria.html?adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1330449407-yAiPXrD1kQsKbG2Bb5A61A&pagewanted=1> and [http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2009/rising\\_temps\\_middle\\_east.pdf](http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2009/rising_temps_middle_east.pdf)

<sup>xi</sup> [http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08DAMASCUS847\\_a.html](http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08DAMASCUS847_a.html)

<sup>xii</sup> <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/09/your-labor-day-syria-reader-part-2-william-polk/279255/>, Part 6.