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The Season of Creation

By Annemarie Paulin-Campbell

As the days move into springtime, there is the familiar joy of seeing new peach blossoms on the trees and the heady smell of white Jasmine as we await the lilac wisteria. The warmth of the sunlight and the lighter early mornings lift our spirits as we begin to emerge from the long hard winter of the third wave of the pandemic. God the Creator is still at work creating and sustaining and bringing to birth the newness of springtime.

At the same time, we are aware that we have seen a constant stream of natural disasters caused by global warming around the world in recent months. There have been floods in Germany, heatwaves in parts of the US, Europe and Northern Africa, wildfires raging on multiple continents of increasing scale and intensity. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released last month, scientists are observing changes in the earth's climate across the whole climate system. Some changes (such as the rising sea level) would take hundreds of thousands of years to reverse. The threat of extreme weather events has escalated dramatically.

If, as a global community, we do not find a way to reduce carbon emissions drastically, we are on course to making our common home unliveable within decades. Pope Francis highlights the urgency of the crisis we find ourselves in as the "cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are becoming increasingly serious and alarming," and invites us to pray for creation and to turn "towards lifestyles which are simpler and more respectful of the environment." (Sunday Angelus address 29 August 2021)

We may feel overwhelmed by the scope of the crisis: indeed, it is already catastrophic. However, the extent of the catastrophe is dependent on our urgent and collective action. If enough people advocate for change by the world's governments – putting creation above financial interests and greed - change is possible. We as individuals can make daily choices that are less taxing on our limited resources. Such as shifting towards eating a more plant-based diet (livestock products are among the most resource-intensive to produce), planting a tree, conserving electricity, walking or cycling where possible.

Pope Francis urges us to participate in the 2021 Season of Creation, which runs from 1 September to 4 October and sign the "Healthy Planet, Healthy People" Petition. This will be presented at the UN Climate Change Conference taking place in Glasgow in November. Join the worldwide program hosted by the Vatican with prayer events, information and resources at www.seasonofcreation.org

As the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote: "The world is charged with the grandeur of God." If we truly believe that God created the beauty and wonder of our natural environment and continues to sustain us, we are called to collaborate with the Creator, to cherish the gift and protect it for future generations.

As we drink in the sights and scents of spring as it blossoms around us, may we enjoy God's creation – and be moved to protect it that our children and grandchildren may share our sense of wonder in the artistry of God's ongoing creation.



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