

OCTOBER 29, 2019 Tuesday of the 30th Week of Ordinary Time Weekday

Rom 8:18-25

Ps 126:1b-6

Lk 13:18-21

The psalmist, fascinated by the beauty of creation, asked himself:

When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers,

the moon and stars that you set in place –

What is man that you are mindful of him,

and a son of man that you care for him? (Ps 8:4-5)

How many times have we been fascinated by the beauty of creation, while contemplating a starry night, sitting along the banks of a river caressed by a light breeze, admiring a sunset or rainbow, or watching children play together happily without regard for race, colour, or social class? How many times have we asked ourselves: Why must this marvellous world, which welcomes us and takes care of us only for a short period, suffer such violence at our own hands? Why can't we live in peace and harmony, making our common home a haven of fraternal coexistence, a pleasant place for everyone? How much nonsense in human projects!

In today's passage taken from the Letter to the Romans, Paul seems to indicate a deep and mysterious bond that unites humanity to all other creatures, a bond that makes humanity the spokesperson of the whole divine work of creation, and also its caretaker. The whole universe finds in humanity its consciousness and through humanity makes itself known and gradually reveals its countless magnificent secrets. The Apostle relies on the long biblical tradition that sees humanity as the interpreter of the praise that all creation raises to its Lord, nature, living beings, and all the elements of the whole world, including time and space.

The biblical writers, women and men who followed each other over the centuries, used many literary forms to talk about the world and its creatures, as they were known, of course, in their time. They expressed themselves poetically, with psalms or hymns, songs and doxologies, personifications and stories, but always with a gaze of faith, with awe and gratitude for the goodness of all that God called into existence through the power of his Word. For this reason, all

creation is imprinted with the Word of the Creator and manifests something of divine glory and its infinite beauty, something of its tender and innocent love, something of its wisdom and intelligence, which pervades the whole, uniting harmoniously in one silent symphony of multifaceted life!

But the creative activity of God is not yet finished, for the Creator Father has never ceased to be present in the world and in the history of humanity, giving life and hope, guiding the destiny of nations and preparing for them a marvellous future, a world with new heavens and a new earth. In all the major events in the history of Israel (the promise to the patriarchs, the liberation from Egypt, the kings, the prophetic preaching, the exile, the return, the messianic hope, the study of the word by the sages) we perceive the presence of God and the initiative God has undertaken to make these events happen. We can therefore say that the water of God's grace flows in the river of human history. It is with immense love, paternal pedagogy, and maternal sweetness that he progressively reveals, through facts and words, his plan of salvation that involves the whole creation. Thus, Isaiah describes the joy of the universe in the liberation of his people:

Raise a glad cry, you heavens – the Lord has acted!

Shout, you depths of the earth.

Break forth, mountains, into song,

forest, with all your trees.

For the Lord has redeemed Jacob,

shows his glory through Israel. (Is 44:23)

The liberating intervention of the Lord makes history, despite the stubbornness and rebellion of humanity, a history of salvation, which will surely succeed because it depends on his eternal love, his infinite power, and his proven faithfulness. This is authentic Christian hope.

Though humanity turns away from God and wants to get rid of him, trying to take God's place and to possess the world, sowing war, hatred, and destruction in a continuous attempt to prevail over others, God continues to guide the world, bringing order from chaos, fertility from sterility, communion from solitude, and unity from division. He does this by choosing people, illuminating their hearts, distributing gifts and talents to them, and strengthening their will to do good. Throughout their history, God's people have nurtured their trust in

the love of God and in the plan for salvation. It is Isaiah, once again, who revives this hope:

See, I am creating new heavens

and a new earth;

The former things shall not be remembered

nor come to mind.

Instead, shout for joy and be glad forever

in what I am creating.

Indeed, I am creating Jerusalem to be a joy

and its people to be a delight. (Is 65:17-18)

Starting from the Paschal Mystery, in which all the light of God's power and faithful love shines, Paul can contemplate in hope the glorious end of history, with the participation of all creation. Sown in our hearts, it is the dynamism of the kingdom that develops towards its fullness. Mixed with our humanity, it is the leaven of the Word that makes us act like a new creation. The Spirit help us to desire, to be actively engaged, and to await with perseverance the manifestation of the glory promised to the children of God.

Sister Earth, Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si'* (n. 2),

now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22).

A serious and proactive Christian critique of modern anthropocentrism, usurper of God's creative role, destroyer of the communion between man and woman and of the peaceful relations between human communities and peoples, is the real concern of the Holy Father's encyclical letter on creation. To reduce it to a generic invitation to protect nature and the planet is to empty it of its critical and constructive force, which comes from faith in Jesus Christ, centre of the cosmos and of history. The renewing fulfilment of creation in the Passover of

Jesus manifests how much care and love God pours upon his works, which he will never allow to fall into the void of the destruction by our sin.

And if the contemplation of nature is fascinating, it is even more enchanting to contemplate this story of salvation, the story of a divine love that never surrenders, that conquers our sin and makes us proclaim with joy: “The Lord has done great things for us; / Oh, how happy we were!” (Ps 126:3).