

Bountiful Creator, you open your hand to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence, and grant that we, remembering the account we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your abundance, for the benefit of the whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom all things were made, and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life! – Moses declared to the Israelites.

Choose life. The Israelites were preparing for their life in the promised land. The days of wandering were nearly behind them. Their slavery in Egypt a distant memory. But before the good days could begin, before they enter the land, Moses offers them some final words.

Not an inauguration speech like we have been hearing from Jesus these past few weeks with the Sermon on the Mount, but a last sermon from their leader, Moses, who wants them to renew their faith and loyalty to God, to choose that path that will lead to life.

Moses said, “I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. If you obey the commandments of the Lord... then you shall live and become numerous... But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray... you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.”

Life and prosperity if they follow the faith; death and adversity if they are led astray. Moses is giving them a stark choice, to choose life.

I think we are being called to choose life as we look at our planet and the effects of climate change.

There was a news story this week I saw in the Washington Post that reported that “temperatures are far warmer in the arctic than ever observed in modern records, and sea ice extent keeps setting record lows...” In Antarctica, there is a large shelf that has cracked and is expected to break off. These are worrying signs.

Here in the US we have made Climate Change into a partisan fight. In many parts of our world, there is no fight. It is an acknowledgment of what is going on in the environment and they are beginning to think of ways we can change the direction we are headed.

The Bishop of Swaziland (next to SA and Mozambique) is inviting Anglicans to take part in a “carbon fast” during Lent – to examine their daily actions and reflect on how they impact the environment: “We are of the earth, we are dust, if the earth birthed us so let us look after her, and reduce our carbon footprint to ensure continued life” he said.

This is similar to what the moderator of the Church of South India said. “A carbon fast is a challenge to us to look at our daily actions, to reflect on how they impact on the environment. It challenges us to take some small steps – some of which will reduce our carbon dioxide output while others will help the environment – for a more sustainable world. In the process we may come to rediscover a different relationship with God, with His Creation and with one another” he said.

“In India, we are aware of climate change because of our warmer temperatures, swings between floods and droughts, and rising sea levels,” he wrote. “Warmer temperatures and rising sea levels are undesirable because they will have negative impacts on agriculture, fishing, community developments, plants and animals that are important to our ecosystems and the protection of our coastline.”

We all are experiencing climate change. There have been Anglican voices from Pacific islanders sharing their vivid stories of the climate change realities with which their communities are living, some of the most drastic effects of climate change are seen among those communities that live so close to the rising sea level.

That we are not concerned about all of this is shocking to me. We only have one planet. That Christians don't see care for creation as our responsibility is sinful.

In the words of Pope Francis from his encyclical: “Earth 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. We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters... “We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.””

Likewise the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of the Greek Orthodox Church puts it this way: "If human beings were to treat one another's personal property the way they treat the natural environment, we would view that behavior as anti-social and illegal. We would expect legal sanctions and even compensation. When will we learn that to commit a crime against the natural world is also a sin?... The way we respond to the natural environment is directly reflects the way we treat human beings. The willingness to exploit the environment is revealed in the willingness to permit avoidable human suffering. So the survival of the natural environment is also the survival of ourselves. When we will understand that a crime against nature is a crime against ourselves and sin against God?"

We are being called into an ethic of life that goes beyond just how we relate to one another, but how we live with the planet, being faithful stewards of God's abundance, for the benefit of the whole creation.

We are being called to choose life & not settle for the path of material things, wealth, and power that ultimately will not provide for us. We are being called to be faithful Christians to follow the path that will lead to life for us and all of God's creation.

"It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience." –Pope Francis

Let our voices be heard as protectors of God's handiwork. Let us choose life. Amen.