

## Homily for Trinity Sunday 7 June 2020

‘Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth’ (Isaiah 40.28). YHWH, the Divine Name, I AM WHO I AM, the source of all being; the Father who speaks through His Word and it is so; whose Spirit brings order out of chaos; we worship our Creator this Trinity Sunday. Worship is always our first duty and joy.

Our first reading from Isaiah began, though, in a tone reminiscent of Job and, in particular, God’s answer to Job’s long lament; the Creator God putting Job in his place. I wonder if there is similar truth for us in these days regarding humanity’s hubris thinking we were the creators, the masters, lording it over the creation as if there were no tomorrow. Ruth Valerio (of Tearfund) has recently written: ‘As hard as it is to hear, the outbreak of coronavirus is not a “natural disaster”. Environmental destruction makes it more likely for viruses to jump species and get into humans. Deforestation, mining, the bushmeat trade, animal trafficking and unsustainable agricultural practices are all likely factors at play.’

Or, in a different direction, the coronavirus pandemic has shone a spotlight on pre-existing injustices and inequalities. Last Sunday, during the Thy Kingdom Come Pentecost service, Pope Francis said:

‘We need to be united in facing all these pandemics that are spreading, not only that of the virus, but also those of hunger, war, contempt for life, and indifference to others.’

As we reflect upon the creation, our place within it, our performance as responsible stewards, our care for one another, we might make our own Job’s humble response to God: ‘I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes’ (Job 42.5-6).

Lament is an honest place to start, but potentially also a creative one: God meets us where we are and can begin to work with us once we have cast off idols, pretences, illusions. And the conclusion to the passage from Isaiah speaks into this, as well as into the state of our morale, mind and heart:

‘Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint’ (Isaiah. 40.30-31). Have we not been faint and weary, perhaps especially in recent weeks as any “novelty” of lockdown has passed? Moreover, throughout lockdown, many have never had a novelty-factor (in fact, including children, young people and young adults, cut off from school, friends, youth centres, seeing no secure future).

Now, given all this, we may feel ill-equipped to wait on the Lord, ready to fly, but both Bishops Christopher and Richard, in Pentecost homilies, have invited us to start such a task. It might well fit as lockdown eases and (pray God) will continue to ease. Bishop Richard urges us to some “deep thinking” around the kind of world and Church we should be. If the thinking is deep, it will take time. It will mean more than hand-sanitiser, social-distancing and Zoom calls, though we may start there. It may sound like the property of politicians and philosophers, but may also turn out to be at the very core of who the Church is: Psalm 8 reminds us of our vocation set only a little lower than the angels; the Church is called to live as the new and true humanity. It may sound very scary and would be if we returned to the old ways and illusions of us being in charge; but what does our Lord say in the Gospel? ‘Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age’ (Matthew 28.16).

Bishop Richard also commended a resource from Tearfund, entitled “The World Rebooted”. In it, as against going back to business-as-usual, we read of this better option: ‘We could live in the knowledge that our decisions affect everyone else, and refuse to define people by their productivity or social status, instead valuing them as made in the image of God. We could pursue economic recovery measures that fast-track action against the climate emergency, protect the vulnerable and create greater global solidarity. We could reboot the world in a way that reduces the racial, economic and the other inequalities exposed during the crisis.’

What a vision is this and how much it would honour the LORD, YHWH, whose name can also be translated I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE. Will we be what God has always been and ever shall be? Will we own, re-own, our proper vocation as sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, little lower than the angels?  
Amen.