

‘Join the flow of justice to abate global boiling and to protect our common home’.

This weekend marks the end of the Season of Creation, 2023, which started on September 1st and ends on October 4th - the feast of St Francis of Assisi. The Season of Creation is an international celebration of God’s handiwork, an open invitation to the entire people of God - to see what God has made, know what is good and demand for it to be **protected**. Each year a theme from scripture is selected - this year it is from the prophet Amos which says, ‘let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!’ We are all invited to join the river of justice and respond positively to the seasonal reminder to protect God’s handiwork.

Injustice manifests itself today in whatever damages the sustainability of our beautiful world that God has created. The people who are most affected by this injustice are the marginalised and those who live in the poorer parts of the world - those trying to live decent lives, despite threats and challenges to their very existence. Their cries for help need to be heard urgently and we must take action to protect them. In his groundbreaking encyclical *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis includes the environment among the poorest and says, **‘the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor’**. Our earth is under constant threat because of how we misuse and abuse God’s creation sometimes unintentionally. So, there is an urgent need to protect all nature in the name of the common good. Justice for the earth is about having a more inclusive understanding of what supports and protects our environment and the actions needed to safeguard it.

António Guterres, secretary - general of the United Nations, recently gave a stark warning about the need to revive our protection efforts. On hearing that July 2023 was the hottest month on record, he said; that the era of global warming has ended and “the era of global boiling has arrived”. Summer temperatures have been stoked by the burning

of fossil fuels which spurred violent weather. We, in the richer nations of the world are mainly responsible for the increased temperatures - which experts have said aided the bush fires this summer causing many deaths and destruction of the natural world.

The Season of Creation urges everyone to join the river of justice on behalf of all Creation and to converge our individual identities and faith communities, in this greater movement for justice - after all the power of a mighty river is dependent on the many tributaries which join it. Since a never-failing stream needs every drop of water, so too the work to protect our common home requires each one of us to act so that our combined actions make a significant difference. Together we can do much - there is time.

Let the Season of Creation 2023 give us the enthusiasm to redouble our efforts to protect creation. Join the river of justice and peace with others so that hope is created and 'change can happen'. After a summer of heightened global temperatures causing extensive bush fires in many places, floods nearer home and intensifying the eutrophication of Lough Neagh on our own doorstep! could we look with new eyes on what we can do? Has the 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' slogan passed its 'sell by date'? Do we need to take on board a stronger and more emphatic buzz-line such as 'Cut-out, Cut-down, Cherish and Conserve'? We too can join the flow of justice for the protection of our earth.

(606 words including the title)