

---

## THE EARTH, OUR HOME, IS A GIFT OF GOD

---



For the third consecutive year, I want to deepen with you during Lent, one of the levels of the family- and parish-based catechetics programmes. The third level, titled *Remain in my Love*, is a beautiful one. God our Father is at the origin of the world, our home, and He calls every human to be a creator with Him. Through our words and deeds, we can make the world a place where it is good to live.

### HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE OUR WORKS!

The first pages of the Bible tell us how God created the universe. We are told that after each act of creation God saw what He had done and that it was good. It is said that after He created man and woman, God saw that it was very good! If only we had the same sense of marvel as God... "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. God saw how good it was. God said: "I will give you trees and animals. I am giving you everything that lives on the earth so that you can take care of it. God created man in His image; man and woman He created them. God saw what He had done, and it was very good!" The author of Psalm 92 cries out: "You make me glad, O Lord, by your deeds; at the works of your hands I rejoice. How great are your works, O Lord! How very deep are your thoughts. You, O Lord, are the most high forever." The same sentiments are expressed in Psalm 8: "O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is your name over all the earth! When I behold the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you set in place – what is man that you should be mindful of him, and the son of man that you should care for him?"

### A GIFT OF LOVE

What could have led God to give us such a beautiful earth, and to create us in His image and likeness? Throughout history, philosophers, poets, and scientists have attempted to answer the question. However, the most beautiful and pertinent answer is given by the Bible. God created the earth "through love," and He gave it to us "through love." The book of Wisdom says: "You love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned. And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you? But you spare all things, because they are yours, O Lord and lover of souls" (Ws.11:24-26). In a beautiful letter he wrote to the Ephesian Christians, Saint Paul exclaims: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing in the heavens! God chose us in him before the world began, to be holy and blameless in his sight, to be full of love; he likewise predestined us through Christ Jesus to be his adopted children – such was his will and pleasure – that all might praise the glorious favor he has bestowed on us in his beloved" (Eph. 1:2b-6). We can be proud to proclaim this love when we profess our faith: "I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth;" and when we say "Amen" at the end, as if to say: "Yes, it is true! It is really beautiful!"

## THE HAPPY WANDERER

So many of us in our youth sang the [French] marching song, "Valderi, Valdera." It is a wonderful song to help us rediscover the earth as the gift of God: "I love to stroll along the path under the clear, blue sky, with my backpack on my back and a joyful heart, and a song on my lips! Sometimes as I watch the stream joyfully coursing along, it seems I hear it say, Come and sing with me! In woods and fields, the boisterous birds join their sound in a single chorus. And all the days, under the warming sun, I shall go on walking as a happy wanderer!" The Lenten path can be the path to rediscover God, the earth, and the human being. It is not for nothing that at the Easter Vigil we shall take the time to praise God's love for His creation, human history, and the stages of humankind's liberation.

## CARING FOR THE EARTH

The best way of appreciating a gift is to take good care of it. When the gift is the earth, we have a thousand reasons to do everything to keep it always beautiful. We used to say that if everyone swept in front of his or her house, the whole village would be clean! Major efforts are being made today to protect our environment, to avoid wasting water and contaminating the soil, etc. Everyone can find the simplest and most effective way of protecting this gift from the Creator. I shall long remember the "programme of life" that the authorities of a major seminary in Brasil required of its future priests: during their studies everyone had to cultivate a garden; this was part of the ABC of their training. When they needed to talk about the gift of God, they would have had first-hand experience of what it means to be God's gardener. When they proclaimed the parables of the Kingdom, they would remember the sower who set out to sow and found all kinds of soil... It would be a good idea to care for a plant, this coming Lent...

## PRAISE TO YOU, YOU LOVE US!

One of the Eucharistic prayers [in French] tells us of the gift of God: "Father most kind, it is truly a feast for us, and our hearts are full of gratitude; with Jesus, we sing our praise to you. Praise to you, you love us! You love us so much that you have set up a big and beautiful world. You love us so much that you give us your Son Jesus, to lead us to you. You love us so much that you gather us in him as children of the same family. Praise to you, you love us." So, every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we proclaim our gratitude for the beauty of God's gift: "Heaven and earth are filled with the glory of the God of the universe." A beautiful hymn expresses this: "God has given me all the earth, and I reached out to the people. God has given me the earth, and I built a more human world. I see a bud opening, a flower at my feet, ripe fruit in the sun. I see a newborn child, a person free as the breeze, a peaceful old man. I hear the sound of water in the summer and of the wind rustling in the leaves, and the silence of the night. I hear the sound of workers, a footstep in the city, and the silence of the poor." May the words of our poets express the beauty of our gift, and especially the grandeur of our God!

*+ François Thibodeau ym*

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.  
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (579) (09 February 2005)