



The Rt Rev Paul Swarbrick  
Bishop of Lancaster  
The Bishop's Office  
Pastoral Centre  
Balmoral Road  
Lancaster LA1 3BT  
01524 596050

## **Pastoral Letter for the Season of Creation 2024.**

My dear people,

We are coming to the end of what our Holy Father, Pope Francis, calls the Season of Creation. It will finish on the memorial for St. Francis of Assisi, 4<sup>th</sup> October, which also marks the anniversary of the Dedication of our Cathedral.

The Season of Creation is not a liturgical season such as Advent or Lent. It has been inaugurated by Pope Francis as an extended time during which we reflect on the gift of creation and on our relationship with creation.

Even if there was not evidence of our global climate crisis, we would do well to give regular attention to the world we live in. Since we call it 'creation', we recognise it is the work of a loving Creator. We are not called to live at odds with creation but in harmony with it. Jews constantly drew from it examples and material for stories that reveal to us the heart and wisdom of God. As disciples of Jesus, we draw from the earth the fundamental elements without which we would not be able to offer Mass. I am thinking of the words used at the Offertory:

*'Blessed are you Lord, God of all creation.  
Through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you,  
the fruit of the earth and work of human hands,  
it will become for us the bread of life.'*

Similar words are spoken for the wine. The earth is not our enemy. It is what the Lord has created for us to inhabit and, through careful reflection on the clues it provides, grow to know something of God. It helps prepare us for the fulness of God's self-revelation found only in Christ.

Reflections on creation are particularly needed now because of the damaging impact our activities are causing. I know well that there has always been change, and always will be. What is of concern is the speed of change and the violence being caused, such that the lives of many – especially the poorest – are adversely affected. The beautiful gift the Lord has given us is being trashed through carelessness and exploitation. We cannot remain disciples of Christ and yet remain indifferent.

I write this as we approach the end of this Pope-given season because we need to carry our pro-active concern beyond the 4<sup>th</sup> of October. Care of this gift should become part of our way of life, a constant and on-going part of our decision-making. I am not talking



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about 'saving the planet'. The planet will look after itself one way or another. What I am talking about is valuing a gift from a loving and generous God.

We unite in celebrating creation in every Mass, knowing that Our Lord takes what we offer and transforms it into His New Creation, the Bread of Life. I am grateful to the Environmental Justice group for their ongoing work. They have circulated two suggestions for parishes and given you a link to various resources. They are also available to offer advice and information for parishes and individuals, as well as being available to give talks in parishes and schools.

I conclude with a word about how difficult we can find all this! Please do not lose your joy in your Faith. Remember we are only passing through this world: it is our temporary home. Remember Jesus' words 'Make your home in me, as I make my home in you.' Do what little you can to appreciate the beautiful gift of creation, out of respect for the Giver of that gift.

With my blessing,

+Rt Rev Paul Swarbrick  
**Bishop of Lancaster**