



The Church of England  
in Essex and East London  
Diocese of Chelmsford

*Environment Sunday / The first Sunday after Trinity*

Sunday 7 June 2026

Readings: Psalm 33.1 -12

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Today we are marking Environment Sunday- the Sunday closest to World Environment Day and its global call for climate action in the wake of rising seas, raging wildfires, heatwaves and melting glaciers as we cross the critical line of a 1.5 degrees Celsius increase to global temperatures.

There are several key dates in the churches year which focus on caring for God's creation. These are vital to our mission.

'...Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of God. For God spake, and it was done; God commanded, and it stood fast' (so wrote the Psalmist of the Psalm set for this Sunday).

From the opening verses of the Book of Genesis which speaks of how God created the world and saw that it was good; to the vision of a new Heaven and a new Earth in the Book of Revelation- the narrative of our salvation embraces the whole of creation and we have been entrusted with a duty of care for it.

In the Book of Genesis and the narrative of creation, Adam was instructed to serve and to safeguard the earth. And yet we talk of dominance and stewardship, the latter reflects separation rather than kinship and not living *with* or living well together. Or as the Franciscans call it 'making room for the other'.

The Canticle of Creatures is attributed to the patron Saint of ecology, St Francis, whose 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of death is being commemorated this year. In this song of Praise the sun is referred to as brother, the moon as sister, the wind as brother, water as sister etc. What this canticle is saying to us is that all of creation has come from the same source, the same origin. Francis understood that All creation bears the print of God- like the thumb print of the potter in the clay. Francis had a sacramental vision of the world where everything has a right to be, because God has willed it. And all life reveals something of its creator.

This year Environment Sunday falls on the first Sunday after Trinity and I am minded of the well-known quote from Thomas Aquinas, who said that 'In all creatures there is the trace of the Trinity' (S.T. 32). Aquinas developed the concept regarding the trace of God in the created world, arguing that every single living thing bears the mark of its Creator.

And therefore, all created things point to the creator who brought forth life from Godself.

God is self-sufficient. God doesn't need anything but chose to create for the purpose of love for God is love. The doctrine of the Trinity reveals that God is all about relationship. God is relationship. God is for relationship. God keeps relationships flourishing.

All life can be understood to be intrinsically linked to the source of life; it participates in the life of the Trinity and gives glory to God in the unity of its difference.

'To behold God in all things is complete joy' wrote Julian of Norwich; 'God loves all that God has created. And so anyone, in loving God, loves all his fellow creatures, loves all that is'(S23).

The Franciscan, Brother Sam Double, has highlighted what we have lost in the newer versions of the Lord's Prayer which ask that God's will be done *on* earth, rather than *in* earth. By saying *on* we are suggesting- put upon/ top-down power but *in* earth is far more in accordance with the theology of creation and incarnation- which teaches us that God remains interested in creation and is part of it and longs to be in relationship with all creatures.

There is sadness in separation, and a lack of joy in seeing ourselves as set apart from, rather than living with. Ultimately of course this is what stops us from flourishing- when we try and live apart from God rather than accepting God with us in relationship.

Environment Sunday is a good opportunity to remind ourselves that we are inextricably bound to one another in mutual relationship, and to God's created order.

Environment Sunday is a good opportunity to recognise our failings in looking after the world and to call upon the church and her members to seek to safeguard better that which God has entrusted into our hands to protect and nurture.

World Environment Day, on June 5th, is the UN's most important day for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the protection of our environment. It is a call for action. The warning signs for our planet are there- sea levels are rising; temperatures are rising; people are losing their homes, their livelihoods, their lives to flooding/ to the inability to grow food; species have been wiped out. If we keep going like this, by

2050 glaciers are predicted to vanish in one third of their sites and droughts may affect three quarters of the population.

Most of us, I imagine, are increasingly concerned about the state of the environment and the future of our planet, but the experts do think that there is time to change the course that our planet is heading towards. I hope and pray that the church will become more aware of our responsibilities towards God's creation, but not from a position of despair or helplessness, but from one of hope for a brighter future and above all love for our neighbour as we wonder at the divine spark in one another, in every creature, in everything created thing and reflect on how all life reveals something about the nature of God who willed it into being- out of love, for love. Thanks be to God, Amen.