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 Davidsonville, MD
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+ IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF
 THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN. +

“On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” ~ Revelation 22:2

What an image for Rogation Sunday! In the olden days, there were days set aside in the church calendar as Rogation Days, in which the church prayed for God’s blessings on the fruits of the earth.

A quaint and entertaining guidebook for clergy, called *The Parson’s Handbook*, published in England in 1907, describes the practice of Rogation Days in former times,

Archbishop Benson also urged that “Where the Perambulation of Parish Bounds is still observed and suitable, I hope that it will always be with such religious services as are happily used in many places’. Unfortunately, the old processions had become associated with tin cans (both empty and full) and with much unseemliness. But in country places the people welcome a revival of the old religious processions; and the parson who omits them loses a great opportunity of touching and helping his flock. In large towns the case is, perhaps, rather different.

As late as about 1765, at Wolverhampton, ‘the sacristan, resident prebendaries, and members of the choir, assembled at Morning Prayers on Monday and Tuesday in Rogation Week, with the charity children, bearing long poles clothed with all kinds of flowers then in season, and which were afterwards carried through the streets of the town with much solemnity, the clergy, singing men and boys, dressed in their sacred vestments, closing the procession, and chanting in a grave and appropriate melody the Canticle *Benedicite omnia opera*.’ The boundaries of the parish were marked at many points by Gospel trees where the Gospel was read.

But here is the best part: The parson may be able to arrange for a partial holiday for these occasions. How I wish I could arrange to give you a partial holiday to come to church during the week! Be that as it may, the church continues to find new expressions for age-old beliefs and traditions. I like to say that we give the biretta a modern face.

The point of the Rogation Days or Rogation Sunday is intercession for God’s blessings on the fruits of the earth, a recognition of what God has given us, by celebrating the land on which our parish was founded. That’s why, in former times, a church would hold a procession around

the Parish boundary - the Perambulation of Parish Bounds - to remind us of what God has endowed us with. The theological basis for such processions is truly incarnational. This is because we, as Christians, believe that God has taken a deep interest in us by becoming one of us in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, the creation that had fallen at the Garden of Eden is given a new chance, a renewed call to repent and return to the Lord. Creation care, therefore, has entered into the Christian vocabulary because of God's taking on our human flesh in Jesus Christ. Therefore, to be good stewards of creation is a duty of being born again in Jesus Christ by water and the Spirit.

So, Rogation Sunday is not only a time when we pray for God's blessings on the fruits of the earth, but also a time for us to renew our commitment to be co-caretakers, if you will, co-sustainers of creation with the Creator.

This past week, I had the privilege and opportunity to attend a special dinner reception at the Swedish Embassy in Washington, DC, following a ecumenical conference called,

Sustaining hope in the face of climate change

It was a joint effort by the Episcopal Church, the Church of Sweden, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The leaders of the three churches issued a joint statement at the conference, in which there was a confession stating the role of the church vis-a-vis the challenges facing God's creation in our time and place.

“Accordingly, we confess our own role in the crisis facing our world:

We confess that, even as God has entrusted the care of the world to human hands, we have treated this sacred trust as a license to consume rather than build up, to reap rather than to sow.

We confess that we have placed the interests of our own comfort and lifestyle before the good of creation and the wellbeing of others, particularly the most vulnerable among us.

We confess our own indifference to the wellbeing of the countless future generations who will bear the brunt of the choices we make today.

For these things and all else we have done to contribute to the desecration of the world God so loves, we repent and ask forgiveness. At the same time, we draw hope – and a grounding for amendment of our own lives – in the growing body of evidence that a transition to a low-carbon society is both feasible and economical, and may help foster a good life. We commit to being the voice that challenges our communities to action: in the global community, in our own political contexts, and in our daily lives.

We commit to being the voice and hands that will witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and build the moral and political will that prompts action from our elected leaders. As international churches with congregations in many nations, we can and will use our global networks to

promote a political framework to limit climate change, while in a unified voice we speak to the world about the urgency of committed climate work. We commit to leading a conversion of epic scale, a metanoia, or communal spiritual movement away from sin and despair toward the renewal and healing of all creation.”

Brothers and sisters, what are we doing at All Hallows to honor this Rogation Sunday? What are we doing at All Hallows to honor the Christian duty to be good stewards of God’s creation? How are we being partners in Creation Care with the Creator of all?

In fact, we have been doing quite a bit. There are always more to be done, of course. We have had an energy audit for all of our buildings. But we have yet to implement many of the changes that will make our buildings more energy efficient and save more money for other ministry programs. We have been recycling our paper products. And recently, we have just installed two compost systems at the Brick Church campus for recycling food wastes. What else can we do to promote recycling? There are also some simple steps through which we can help with this effort and call. The Energy Minister of Province I of the Episcopal Church, the Reverend Stephanie Johnson, who is a member of the Executive Council Committee on Science, Technology and Faith, which I chair, gave me several stickers they promote for churches to become more energy-friendly. The sticker says, “Turn off the light for God’s sake!” Do we close the doors behind us when we leave a building. What is our practice at home?

Some of these things may seem trivial. And we may ask, what will my little action help with reverting the course of climate change anyway? Let me tell you, these environment-conscious practices are the good deeds we are called to perform by our faith. Consider the Parable of the Mustard Seed when Jesus said,

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; **32** it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.” ~ Matthew 13:31-32

Our efforts in being good stewards of God’s creation will yield fruits with far-reaching impact.

Not only will our efforts have an impact for our children, but they will also help ensure that we are doing our part for passing on a healthier, more sustainable, and more livable world for our children’s children, and many more generations to come.

My fellow stewards of God’s creation, let us renew the fervor of Rogation Sunday with a strong commitment to Creation Care! May God help us and bless us in these efforts! Amen.

WORK CITED

Dearmer, Percy. *The Parson’s Handbook*, pp. 529-532, 1907