

Sitting with Pope Francis – Praying with *Laudato Si'*

Social Justice Week 2017: Weaving bonds of belonging

“We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it.” Pope Francis

Pope Francis, in his letter *Laudato Si'*, is passionate that community and connection is one of the most powerful things we have, as we respond to the significant social and environmental challenges facing us today.

He discusses how global change in the form of social breakdown, increased violence, loss of identity, and inequitable distribution and consumption of energy are some of the signs of real social decline.

And yet *“if communities are created... any place can turn from being a hell on earth into the setting for a dignified life.”*

The theme for Social Justice Week this year is *Weaving bonds of belonging: Knowing our neighbours*. We focus on what it looks like today to build communities of hope and belonging right where we are.

Let us slow down, spend some time with the words of Pope Francis, examine our connections and disconnections, and consider one small action that we can take to weave bonds of belonging in our daily life this week.

This prayer and reflection resource can be used in a group or family setting where quotes are read out loud and questions are discussed and ideas are shared. Or it can be done alone with a journal and with the Holy Spirit, our guide.

All the quotes in this reflection have been taken from the encyclical *Laudato Si' (Praise Be To You) – On care for our common home* by Pope Francis. The full text can be found at:

www.vatican.va

Grounding in the presence of God

Begin and choose to be present, set aside distractions, notice the environment and centre on God. Sit in silence for a few moments before beginning.

Read each Pope Francis quote out loud, allow a time of silence, then read the questions slowly. Quietly contemplate your answer after each question. At the end of the reflection, share with the group what stood out to you, or write in a journal your response.

The Lord, in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. He comes not from above, but from within, he comes that we might find him in this world of ours. #236

The Father is the ultimate source of everything, the loving and self-communicating foundation of all that exists. #238

Where have I recently encountered God “in this world of ours”?

Giving thanks for connections

Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth. #92

Many people... are able to weave bonds of belonging and togetherness which convert overcrowding into an experience of community in which the walls of the ego are torn down and the barriers of selfishness overcome. #149

What are the relationships and connections in my life that I am grateful for?

Is there a time when I witnessed a real sense of community? What did it look like?

Noticing the disconnections

Today's media do enable us to communicate and to share our knowledge and affections. Yet at times they also shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences. #47

Many professionals, opinion makers, communications media, and centres of power, being located in affluent urban areas, are far removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems. #49

Disregard for the duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with my neighbour, for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruins my relationship with my own self, with others, with God and with the earth. When all these relationships are neglected, when justice no longer dwells in the land, the Bible tells us that life itself is endangered. #70

We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it. #229

What strikes me when I read the words above?

Think through my interactions and relationships:

with my Creator, (pause)

with creation, (pause)

with the people I live with, (pause)

with my immediate and extended family, (pause)

with my co-workers, (pause)

with my neighbours, (pause)

with the people I share communion with, (pause)

with those who I see struggling, (pause)

with those who I see are lonely, (pause)

and anyone else that comes to mind... (pause)

What is God drawing my attention to?

Invitation to love

St Therese of Lisieux invites us to practise the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile, or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. #230

Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. #231

Where in my life is God calling me to “sow peace and friendship”?

What is the “small gesture” I can practise this week with great love?

(If in a group) What is a simple action we can all take this week to weave bonds of belonging?

Concluding prayer

E te Atua, source of all life, we remember that all things are connected. Plant in us a deep conviction of our interconnectedness. May our decisions and actions reflect love and respect for all people and creatures that we share our common home with.

Guide us as we weave bonds of belonging in simple ways, in our daily life.
Amen