

Liturgical Resources for Respect Life Sunday 2019

What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us?

Respect Life Sunday 2019 is celebrated on 13 October 2019.

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference recognise this day on the Catholic Calendar as an opportunity to focus together on how our Catholic tradition celebrates and protects human life. In 2019, the focus is on care of the environment.



These resources have been prepared by The Nathaniel Centre – the New Zealand Bioethics Centre, and the National Liturgy Office of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference.

Reflections on the readings

This may be useful reflection material for Liturgy Committees and for the preparation of homilies.

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First reading: 2 Kings 5:14-17 *His flesh became like the flesh of a little child, he was clean of his leprosy.*

Psalm 98: *All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God.*

Second reading: 2 Timothy 2:8-13 *If we have died with him, we shall also live with him.*

Gospel: Luke 17:11-19 *"Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."*

In the times and places of Scripture, leprosy was a feared and dreaded disease. Not only did it disable and disfigure its victims and shorten their lives, it also isolated and marginalised people with leprosy, as they had to live outside the city boundaries and to call out to passers-by to keep away. People with leprosy were seen to have no options, to have no hope of healing or readmittance back into society.

Today we still need to be aware of the ways we separate and isolate people with physical and mental illnesses from the mainstream of society. But advances in medical science mean that leprosy is no longer a hopeless medical condition, but one that can be treated.

However, the hopelessness and fear with which Jesus's society regarded leprosy, parallels the perception of many people today regarding the precarious future of the planet on which

we live. This year, young people in particular have shown that they are familiar with the urgency of scientific predictions - that unless we act promptly and radically to address the climate crisis and other forms of environmental pollution and degradation, the future of human life itself is at risk. The human and the habitat are in need of healing and restoration.

Pope Francis recognised four years ago, in his encyclical on the care of our common home *Laudato Si'*, that climate change is one of the most significant challenges facing humanity. He said even doomsday predictions cannot any longer be met with irony or disdain, as the likelihood grows that we will leave to future generations debris, desolation and filth, along with the increased likelihood of catastrophic events.

However, while his encyclical squarely faces up to this reality, it does not leave us without hope.

All is not lost. Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom. Pope Francis: *Laudato Si'* #205

In the midst of the hopelessness that leprosy created in a society without the means to treat it, Jesus came as healer, offering hope to victims, and giving them a new path back to society. Today's readings are full of the sense of life and hope that we have in sharing our life with the risen Christ. Our faith will quell our fears and bring renewed strength for restoring the health of our earthly home.

Traditionally, Respect Life Sunday has focused on issues at the beginning and end of life, and we need to continue to focus on these questions. But our Catholic tradition has long recognised that there are many other threats to human life. People die in wars and as a result of poverty. People die also because of environmental disasters and loss of food and water supplies. In the past we may have referred to this as a consistent ethic of life. Pope Francis calls it integral ecology, and asks us to work together for a hopeful future for our children and grandchildren.

There are some articles by Auckland theologian Elaine Wainwright on understanding the connections between the Biblical accounts of healings and our need to heal the earth in Tui Motu:

- An ecological reading of the healing of a woman and a girl in Luke 8: <https://hail.to/tui-motu-interislands-magazine/publication/430InQe/article/3upTSDK>
- An ecological reading of the healing of the blind man in Luke 18: <https://hail.to/tui-motu-interislands-magazine/publication/430InQe/article/r4oz2Xw>

Prayer of the faithful

You may wish to include one or more of these suggested prayers, or to write prayers which reflect the Respect Life Sunday 2019 theme of care for the environment.

Our response is “Creator God, hear our prayer.”

We pray for our Church communities: That we may see the natural world as a gift to be cared for, nurtured and passed onto to the next generation as we were given it.

We pray for political leaders: That they will see past short term elections and present-day concerns to make wise decisions that will protect the environment for future generations.

We pray for people affected by loss of land and essential food and water supplies resulting from climate change: Grant them what they need to survive, and grant us the awareness and determination to respond with compassion to save our neighbours' lives.

We pray for young people concerned about the environment, and for people of all ages who are taking action to respond to the climate crisis: That we may work with hope and courage to heal our world.

We pray for all peoples, that we may grow in the awareness that any behaviour that does not respect the environment damages human coexistence and undermines the foundations of peace.

We pray that we may use our technological inventiveness to undo the damage we have done to God's creation and use resources to sustain God's gift of nature.

We pray united by our Catholic faith and respect for all life, including the life of unborn generations, that the human family takes action to transition to clean energy and keep warming of the planet to acceptable levels.

Further suggestions:

Pastoral letter: The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference is providing a pastoral letter, which you may choose to read after Communion, or make available in other ways.

Video: A short video is available from The Nathaniel Centre which parishes may wish to display before or after Mass, or after Communion.

Church flowers and decorations: It may be worth having dialogue with parishioners charged with flower arrangements and other decorations. Perhaps instead of providing cut flowers this week, the parish may choose to decorate the church with living plants which can be planted outside after Mass.

Hymns: Listed here are some well known songs that celebrate Creator God. Many have versions available on Youtube.

Canticle of creation
All creatures of our God and King
Praise to the Lord
Laudato si o me Signore by Damian Lundy
Canticle of brother sun
How great is our God
Shout to the Lord
Be Still.

Focal point or screen image: Think about a focal point or banner or screen image before Mass. Electronic copies of the Respect Life Sunday Poster images in powerpoint format are available to download from the Nathaniel Centre website (www.nathaniel.org.nz) for use in parish powerpoints and displays



Laudato Si' litany (attached): This could be used by any groups looking for extra nourishment from this important and groundbreaking encyclical. It could be introduced before or after the Eucharist with left and right sides of the church taking sets of quotations in turn.

Offertory Gifts: "What earth has given and human hands have made" As well as the bread and wine this could be an opportunity to also bring forward home produce or baking for those in need.

Parish gathering for morning tea or supper after Mass: Make it plastic free; hospitality could include fruit and nuts instead of the usual packet of biscuits; have some containers to gather up any leftovers for worm farms; collect and take home coffee grounds for the garden. 'Be the change you want to see.'

Children's liturgy: Included is an outline for leaders to use with children under 7yrs and a second outline to use with young people 7-10yrs.

Youth groups: Included is an outline for leaders to use with youth groups 11-15yrs.