

HOMILY The World 190604 EMW

One of the lovely things about the English language is the way in which the same word, or what sounds like the same word can have two entirely different meanings. Thus if I tell you: “I’m having problems with that silly old M***R”, your understanding will depend on whether you think I am talking about horses or about local government.

There’s a similar risk of misunderstanding when we read the Gospel of John. He uses the word “world” on the one hand to mean “the object of God’s love”, or on the other as a “symbol of all that is unbelieving and hostile to God” (1) Two very different ideas.

Early on in his reign Pope Francis encouraged us to take an interest in the physical environment in which we live, to care for the planet. As someone has said “there is no planet B” So the fact that people are protesting about the negative effects of global warming, and saying we need to do something about climate change is a good thing. As Catholics we can and should co-operate whole heartedly with such initiatives.

But I wonder. At the same time as the need to preserve the planet is proclaimed, we hear people demanding the so-called right to terminate the existence of babies in the mother’s womb. Here, very clearly we see “the object of God’s love” at risk from “all that is unbelieving and hostile to God”.

Why the unbelief? Why the hostility? Clearly, we, as Christians, have in many places lost ground before the forces of an evil that is truly destructive and literally life threatening. My suggestion is that by taking our place beside those who are concerned for the future of creation, we may ask them to around themselves again to see that this creation speaks to us, so eloquently, of the Creator.

At this time, between the Ascension and Pentecost, the Church traditionally prays for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Across this country so many young people are being confirmed.

Let us pray that, we, the Church, will be inspired to find the words and the ways to speak to those around us, especially the younger members of society, that they may see in the beauty of creation the handiwork of a Creator. Yes let them look at the beauty of the plants, mountains and the forests, but, and this is our prayer: “...let them know that much better than these is their Lord, for the author of beauty created them.” (Wis. 13.3 ANRSV)

(1) PERKINS Pherne “The Gospel According to John” 61:165, p974 in: BROWN Raymons et al (edd), The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, Geoffrey Chapman, London 2nd ed 1990

Canon Paschal Ryan

Our Most Holy Redeemer and St Thomas More Catholic Church

Chelsea

London SW3 5HS