

THE SERMON for Pentecost 18 – October 12th, 2025.

Reading: Jeremiah 29: 1, 4-7; Psalm 66: 1-11; 2 Timothy 2: 8-15; Luke 17: 11-19.

When Revd Sue asked me to take the service today, saying “you can celebrate St Francis and bless the animals” my heart groaned somewhat. Those who know me, know I often groan at the “St Francis of the bird bath” connotations. I love animals, don’t get me wrong, but something within me rebels, saying, Francis was much more than blessing animals! However, I then got an almighty divine kick up the backside, and so here I am blessing the animals a little later in the service!!

What attracted me to the Franciscans and Francis’ often eccentric lifestyle, was that for me, Franciscan spirituality is very holistic, it reaches out to the whole of creation, the whole of life experiences.

In more recent years, I have been very involved in “Lifelong Formation” within the worldwide Third Order – looking at ways to continue our journey of learning and growing as Franciscans. Through this I was put in way of a booklet called *Franciscan Ways of Service: Hopeful reflections in a Perilous Time* by Jeff Golliher. Jeff is a Third Order Franciscan in the Province of the Americas, a priest in the Episcopal Church, a cultural anthropologist and been a consultant on the climate crisis to the Anglican Communion and the United Nations.

His book, while very academic, certainly put some alarming facts before me and brought to my awareness many of the issues facing our world.

Scroll forward to the beginning of this year.

I don’t know if you have ever had the experience of having books call to you to be read?! I do on occasions, and usually, if I am obedient, they tend to be lifechanging!

Along these lines, I was confronted by a book called *Life after Doom* by Brian McLaren. Those of you who are fans of Richard Rohr, may have encountered him, as he is a colleague of Rohr’s.

In this book, McLaren’s ‘diagnosis’ of the planet’s woes are not pretty reading saying that our global civilization as currently structured is unstable and unsustainable:

- ecologically we suck too many of the Earth’s resources for the Earth to replenish, and pump out too much waste for the Earth to detoxify.
- economically our civilisation’s financial systems are complex, interconnected, fragile and deeply dependent on continual economic growth, without which it will stumble towards collapse.
- this system distributes more and more money and power to those who already have it, creating a small network of elites who live in luxury and accrue more power, with billions living in near poverty with little power.
- as a result, our democratic political systems are becoming strained, social unrest and conflict are increasing.
- And the planet has reached a ‘tipping point’ in the balance of population growth and the ecology, which Earth can no longer sustain. ¹

He puts forward four scenarios, describing a number of thought processes people have about the crisis the planet is currently facing.

Scenario 1. Our current civilization will continue to destabilize the Earth’s life-support systems, which will in turn destabilize civilization, creating a downward spiral in both the environment and civilization. The hope is that enough of our citizens and institutional leaders will wake up and respond with sufficient urgency, unity and wisdom to transform our civilization and learn to live within environmental limits, and thus avoid collapse.

Scenario 2. Our civilization will not respond with sufficient urgency, unity and wisdom to restabilize our environment and to live within environmental limits. As a result, our current global civilization will decline towards collapse to the point where only a percentage of the current population will survive to regroup in the resulting severely destabilized global ecosystem and rebuild new communities within new structures.

Scenario 3. Our global civilization will collapse and humans who survive will face a tenuous future on a decimated Earth. They will look upon the ruins of our current civilization and experience the shock of how much humanity squandered.

Scenario 4. As the Earth's environment continues to deteriorate, human civilization will descend into a highly destructive collapse process. This catastrophic, mutually assured self-destruction of civilization will not only result in total or near-total extinction of humans, but it will also drive a significant percentage of land and sea life into extinction.

Sorry to be so cheerful, not!

I am praying for Scenario 1, but at present, with climate deniers and those intent on extracting and plundering more and more of the planet's natural resources, "because we need to keep our economy strong", Scenario 4 looks more and more certain.

How is this a celebration of Creation you may well ask?

I remember, in my early days of priestly ministry, attending a Ministers' Network meeting and being greeted with quotes from the Old Testament encouraging us to "Subdue" the planet and why worry "because it is all going to burn anyway"! Certainly, that was not my reading of Genesis 1:28.

What I have just quoted comes from the second chapter of McLaren's 21-chapter book. Once laying out the dilemma the planet faces, he then moves on to encouraging and giving the reader skills and suggestions in planning for the best outcomes.

From a Franciscan perspective, I cannot sanitise or turn my back on what is happening to Creation. We are so blessed to live, not only in Australia but in this exquisite corner of our country.

Many put Francis down as a 'tree hugging eccentric', but he was not about all the fluffy things in life, in fact he rebelled against the corruption of the status quo of his time – the power of the church, the lack of care for the poor and sick and so on.

For him, it was a case of seeing God's creation through deeply spiritual eyes. Seeing creation as an equal part of what God had created and placed humankind in.

While we celebrate Creation, we do so with responsibility to care for it, to protect it, for the life it gives, not just to us, but all creatures, great and small.

We do so fighting for justice and the integrity of our world, we do so with gratitude for its beauty and richness, and we do so prepared to actively care for what we have been given.

As Jeremiah tells the Babylonian exiles to continue to live their lives but do so looking at the 'big picture', for us this includes the welfare of all of Creation in mind.

And, to do so with gratitude to the Creator.

As Jesus says to the one healed leper who returned to thank him, were there not others involved in the healing.

In my celebration of the beauty of the Creation I am blessed to live in, I am mindful each morning to give thanks and to pray for the places where humanities irresponsibility towards the Earth, towards fellow humans and in the creation of injustice and greedy systems abound.

Let us not bury our heads in the sand or be ignorant of the state of our planet. It is not a finite resource. Let us be mindful of our responsibilities to care and nurture this planet, as it nurtures and nourishes us.

To rework a couple of our prayers from the prayer book:

*We give thanks for the beauty and abundance of the earth.
Guide with your wisdom and power the leaders of the nations,
so that everyone may live in harmony with your creation,
wisdom and generosity in our use of its bounty,
so that all may live in peace and mutual trust,
sharing with justice, unselfishness, compassion and fairness
all that you have blessed us with. Amen.*

Revd Sally Buckley
October 12, 2025

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

1. Brian McLaren, *Life after Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart*, published by Hodder and Stoughton; © 2024.