

Second Sunday of Advent 2019



PREPARE

FROM THE READINGS

FIRST READING: A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse ... on him the spirit of the Lord rests, a spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.

Isaiah 11:1-2

SECOND READING: May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus. Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Romans 15:5-7

GOSPEL: The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”

Matthew 3:3

REFLECTIONS

It is time to prepare God’s ways for the future:

You guided me by routes I did not know.

St Augustine

Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little.

Pope Francis, On Care for Our Common Home 222

The quality of your faith will be judged by the quality of justice in the land;

and the quality of justice in the land will be judged by how the weakest and most vulnerable groups in society (widows, orphans, and strangers) fared while you were alive.

Ronald Rolheiser, Sacred Fire

“People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do.”

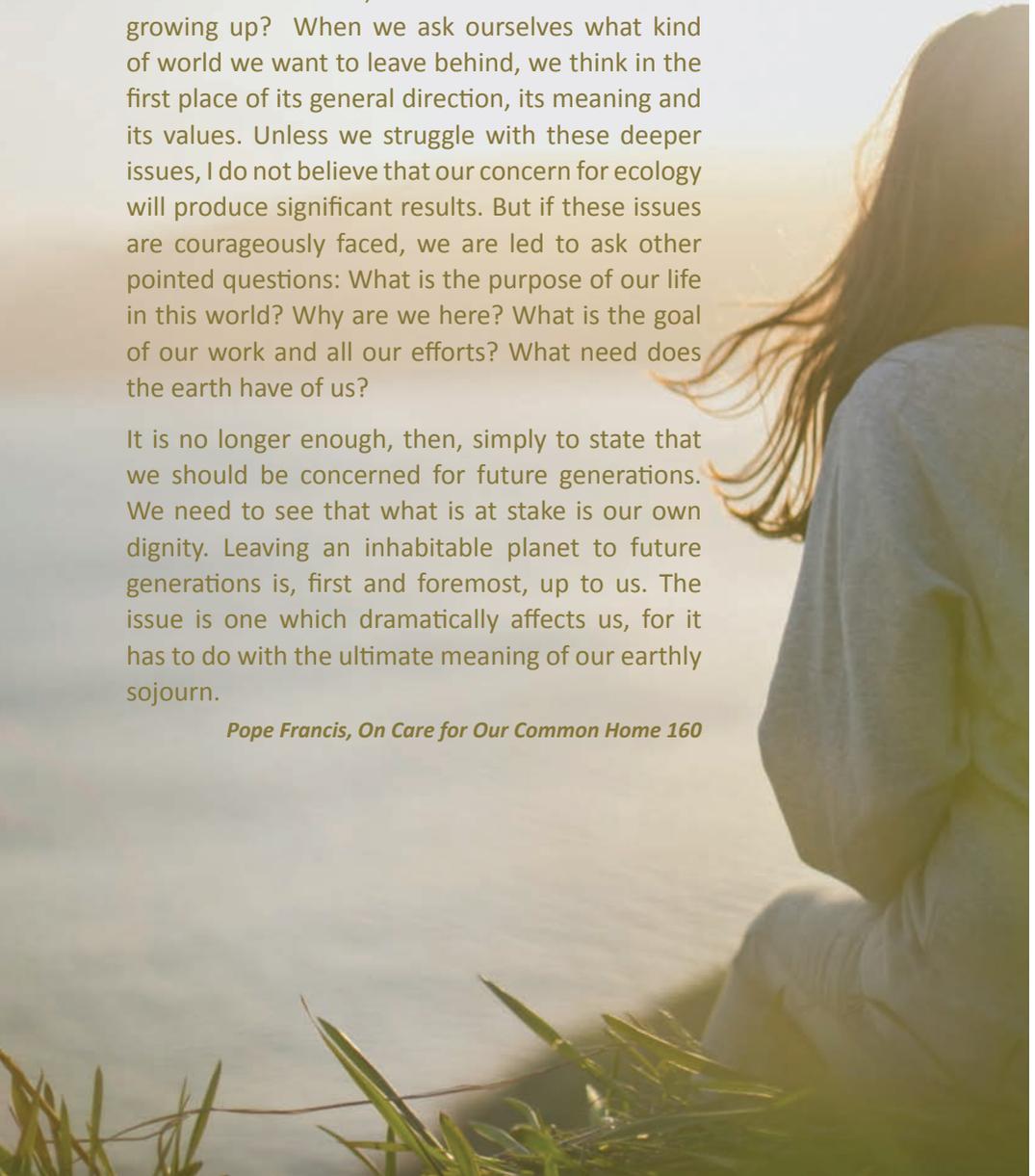
Dorothy Day

WHAT KIND OF WORLD?

What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values. Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results. But if these issues are courageously faced, we are led to ask other pointed questions: What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?

It is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations. We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn.

Pope Francis, On Care for Our Common Home 160



FOR THINKING AND TALKING

1. **From these readings and reflections**, what words, phrases and insights stand out for you?
2. **Imagine** your life as the place where 'the spirit of the Lord rests, a spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and fear (reverence) of the Lord?
3. **Remember** what you love most about your life and this world, and what it is you want, more than anything else, to leave to your children, your children's children, future generations.
4. **Express** a hope or intention for the future.

CLOSING PRAYER

**My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.**

I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think that I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore I will trust you always,
though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.

Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude



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Acknowledgements: *Pope Francis, On Care for Our Common Home, Laudato Si, 160; 222:* Ronald Rolheiser, *Sacred Fire: A Vision for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity*, New York: Crown Publishing / Penguin Random House, 2014; Dorothy Day: *St Augustine, Confessions*, London: Penguin Classics, 1963. *Thomas Merton, Thoughts In Solitude*, New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1999.