



# SEASON OF CREATION

## **Reflection on this week's Gospel – Matthew 16:21-27: Moving from what I want to what the World needs.**

The Gospel passage opens in a dramatic way: "... Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." (Mt 16:21). In a few strokes, Jesus passes from suffering to death and from death to life! He sketches out the path to be "raised to life", for him and for every disciple. Jesus' own mission was to offer us life and life in abundance: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (Jn 10:10)

Earth, our planetary home, is a unique place where complex forms of life exist – at least as far as our current scientific knowledge goes. Our planet, the third from the Sun, was molded to become a home for life, over billions of years. Life began as microscopic, then evolved into complex forms of life, to arrive at the rich biodiversity of life today, including us humans. In God's loving plan, this planet was prepared to host not only life, but life in fullness, in the supreme event of the Incarnation. "In the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), "the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us" (Jn 1:14)

The precarious state of our common home as evidenced by the climate crisis, the unprecedented biodiversity loss, the rapid depletion of natural resources and pollution of the land, water, and air, etc. shows that we are indeed interfering with God's plan for life to flourish on Earth!

Secondly, the Gospel passage evidences the obstacles to embrace this cycle of life. Peter's "human" way of thinking cannot accept a suffering Messiah as prophet Isaiah had foretold centuries ago (Is 53:4-6). Peter, who just a few verses earlier in the same chapter of the gospel of Matthew was commended by Jesus as the "rock", now becomes the stumbling stone!

We too can stumble, like Peter, caught up in the destructive cycle of instant gratification, blinded by the glittering light of worldly success, enthralled by an economic system that allows a small minority to indulge in hedonistic lifestyles, while the majority struggle with stagnant wages and diminished earnings, and nearly 800 million of our sisters and brothers – one out of ten! – go to bed hungry every day!

We too refuse, like Peter, to accept the "cost of discipleship" in order to rise to new life.

Jesus himself says in Jn 12:24: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it cannot bear much fruit". This "cycle of life" applies to the entire creation and to each one of us. The pathway to fullness of life goes through a cycle "dying" to us, of "losing" ourselves, of "denying" ourselves, as Jesus explains in the passage as the "cost of discipleship".

While rampant consumerism is ravaging the planet and the bodies of the poor, we are challenged to a discipleship of simple lifestyle, restraint, and sacrifice. Pope Francis quotes the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in *Laudato Si'* in this regard:

He [Patriarch Bartholomew] asks us to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which “entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God’s world needs. It is liberation from fear, greed, and compulsion.” (*Laudato Si'*, 9)

Thirdly, the gospel of today also speaks about our responsibility regarding the choices that we make to defend and promote life. The passage concludes with Jesus’ affirmation: “For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.” (Mt 16:27)

We will be rewarded “according to what we have done”! Scientists speak of the anthropogenic causes of the contemporary ecological crisis, and of the climate crisis, in particular. Creation care is about responsible living! Dave Bookless writes: “Like all managers or stewards, we may be called by the owner to give an account of how we have used or abused what has been entrusted to our care.” He goes on to add: “Those of us who live in Western societies have indeed been entrusted with much in terms of material wealth and natural resources, and we are answerable not just to the world’s poor and to our fellow creatures but to God for how we use and develop them.” (Dave Bookless, *Planet Wise: Dare to Care for God’s World*, 94.)

On this first Sunday of the Season of Creation, let us embrace the “cycle of life” that Jesus offers us in the gospel of today, confess our resistances to walk the path of radical discipleship, and own up our responsibility for the planetary garden of life entrusted to our care, and especially of the most vulnerable in our midst.

May we work to promote life, life in all phases and all forms of life, and may we become co-carers with God of our beautiful planetary garden and of one another

*Source: Sermon Notes, Preaching for God’s World, [www.seasonofcreation.org/resources](http://www.seasonofcreation.org/resources)*