

The Grace of Rural Places

GOD REVEALING, GOD INSPIRING, GOD CHALLENGING

"Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us." St Francis of Assisi

4th Sunday of Lent

**"When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine."
Lk 15: 1-3, 11-32**

God Revealing.....

Approximately 35% of Australia's population live in rural places. Rural areas feed our cities and generate income for the nation. The need for food security will grow as the world population grows. Australia's rural areas are already seen as places of agricultural importance by those from other countries who are concerned about feeding their peoples. www.regional.org.au

Scientists say the impacts of rising carbon emissions on climate will exacerbate the already harsh climatic conditions, water supply and ancient depleted soils. goo.gl/8uNiFv
As the demand for water and food increases, there are competing views on the future of agriculture in Australia. Communities are afraid.

Some see the growing global demand for protein and grain as opportunities for investment in technological approaches to agriculture such as bio-technology and gene technology. Pope Francis says, "We cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention to the consequences of such interference". Pope John Paul II in LS #131. goo.gl/jQQTgH

Others see the damage that over-use of fertilisers, chemicals and large scale farming has had on soils, ecological systems and waterways. They are using agro-ecology, based on the science of ecology, to manage food production. www.soilsforlife.org.au

"The human being cannot live without a habitat that is integrally healthy, good and beautiful."

Archbishop Sorondo,

Pontifical Academy of Sciences

God Inspiring.....

Pope John Paul II said in Canberra in 1986, "Look dear people of Australia, and behold this vast continent of yours! It is your home! The place of your joys and pains, your endeavours and your hopes! And for all of you Australians, the way to the Father's house passes through this land – Jesus Christ is the way." Reflect on the interconnectedness of rural places and urban places in our land.

Place has often been divorced from our Christian spirituality which has been focussed on life hereafter. Fr Denis Edwards is leading the way in helping us realise that "The incarnation is about God embracing this created world, the world of matter and living creatures, and doing so eternally." Denis Edwards, "Jesus and the Natural World".

Reflect on being a creature who is dependent on all God's gifts in rural places. How can we regain a spirituality that is attuned to how the land speaks, questions, informs our actions?

Prayer: "We express our sorrow for the limits we have put on God's Spirit at work in us, by our unbelief and lack of understanding of God's presence in us, by acting as if we are disconnected from God, our neighbour, and our world, by our deliberate words and actions that have ruptured connectedness and by our lack of concern for social justice and environmental issues. Michael Morwood, "Praying a New Story".



Image source: goo.gl/8e9dZw

Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself; the same is true of the harmonious ensemble of organisms existing in a defined space and functioning as a system.

Pope Francis, Laudato Si' #140.

God Challenging.....

With the challenge of climate change, Pope Francis proposes a vision for a positive future of integral ecology that links environmental, economic and social ecology? He calls for an education in this process. Read Ch 4 of Laudato Si' (Care for our Common Home). Get involved in a Laudato Si' study and action group.

Read:
Australia can't feed the world but it can help: goo.gl/KdHzm
Agro-ecology: <http://ecoag.org.au>

Discuss these two approaches in the light of Laudato Si'. Get involved in groups that are protecting rural areas eg: Landcare, farmers against mining of agricultural land.

Compost your food scraps and add to the soil in the garden at your home or church.

Learn more about soil: goo.gl/OC4aLZ



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