

June 1, 2008 -- Ninth Sunday of Ordinary Time
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Deuteronomy 11: 18, 26-28	One is blessed for following and cursed for not following God's commandments.
Psalms 31: 2-3, 3-4, 17, 25	God is a rock of refuge, a stronghold to save all. Our time is in God's hands.
Romans 3: 21-25, 28	All people are one in Christ.
Matthew 7: 21-27	A firm foundation is necessary for building a stable future.

“I’m coming back in 500 years.
 First thing I’m gonna do
 When I get back here
 Is see these things I love.
 And, they better be here!”

These words are from the Holly Near song, “Bound by the Beauty.”

Near goes on to sing of the open field, the birds’ song, the dappled flowers and the forest floor. She is warning us that humanity is quickly destroying these beautiful things throughout the world and we better change our ways. Or else!

Near’s beautiful lyrics fit well with today’s scripture readings which remind us of two things:

- Behavior matters and has long term consequences, and
- We are all one in Christ.

An important human quality is the ability to imagine the future and to act in such a way now that future life will be okay for those who follow us.

A few years ago a massive earthquake struck a small mountainous city in the Philippines on the northern island of Luzon. The city itself was not at the epicenter of the quake but the effects of the quake were devastating. So much so, that the quake is remembered as the killer quake. While there were a number of factors that contributed to the devastation caused by the quake, one clear and undeniable factor was deforestation, for about three decades prior to the quake, the hills in and around the city were being systematically cleared of trees.

For years after the quake, those who survived planted and nurtured hundreds of thousands seedlings, tiny trees about eight inches high. Individuals planted seedlings in their yards and communities of people planted seedlings in their neighborhoods and on the almost barren hillsides, committing themselves to continuously monitoring their growth. For inspiration to sustain this project, the bishop of the vicariate and the mayor of the city founded a re-greening movement and became its co-chairs.

This is akin to giving a gift to the future. In all likelihood the people who planted the trees will not be the people who benefit from them. Neither will the reforested land prevent another earthquake, but it may limit its effects so that the children of tomorrow may not have to endure the ravages of loss that their parents and grandparents endured in the killer quake. Of course, tree planting also has the benefit of providing a means of reducing carbon in the atmosphere, a very important climate crisis consideration.

The message of Jesus applies to the circumstances of all times. It would not be difficult to cite any number of places in our personal lives and in society where we need to

rethink how we have been acting, humbly acknowledge mistakes and do something about them. Perhaps we do not have to undertake a massive tree planting movement but, doubtlessly, all need to take better care of the environment. Also, we need to do this generously, considering the needs of future generations of people. This may very well mean living more simply and using energy more efficiently. Truly, as the psalm says, we need to take courage and be stouthearted!

Today's second reading reminds us that all people are one in Christ. The consequence of this is to act with everyone in mind. What we do affects others around the world, either immediately or in the future as in the case of loading the air with too much carbon dioxide. Before, we did not notice what we were doing. Now we see that we have created an unsafe atmosphere that is already having deleterious effects on people in some parts of the world, particularly the least developed,* and will surely affect everyone in the future unless we seriously reconsider how we are polluting the atmosphere and take appropriate action.

On March 9, 2008, the Vatican newspaper published an article that urges Catholics to reflect upon modern social sin. The first of seven of these sins listed is environmental pollution.

It is important this year as we consider the national leadership for the next four years that we learn the positions of those running for public office regarding environmental pollution and the climate change crisis. To preserve the natural world is key to passing on a sustainable future to all who follow us. It is essential that leaders understand the links between strong economy, healthy environment and future generations of people whose needs also must be met. Also, we are bound to consider the effects of our actions on people in other lands. In addition, to be all saved in the blood of Christ, making us all sisters and brothers, requires us to think not only of the present generation but of all those who will come after us all around the world and to act now in their behalf.

It really is good to think 500 years ahead! The beautiful things we love to see will surely be the things people would love to see in 500 years.

For more information:

Read more about the impact of U.S. policy decisions on the environment in *Loving our neighbor in a shrinking world*. Through this resource, Maryknoll missionaries encourage voters in the 2008 elections to scrutinize candidates' policy proposals through the lens of those who, both in the U.S. and overseas, are politically disempowered and suffer the consequences of the United States' inadequate response to climate change. See especially page 3, for the story of Kessai Besoto of the Solomon Islands.

*[Email for a copy, or find the election guide here:
www.maryknollogc.org/2008elections/index.htm](http://www.maryknollogc.org/2008elections/index.htm)*

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