

## Fr Hugh's Homily for 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday Year C

We are reflecting on creation in this Mass, but at the same time it is a week when we pray for prisoners and their lives. How can we put these together?

Perhaps the most famous line from Pope Francis' letter 'Laudato Si' is calling us to listen to 'the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.' He makes it very clear that poverty and the land, our earth, are closely related.

What greater cry could there be than that from inside the prisons across the world. What is one of the greatest causes of people being in those prisons, whether in Texas or Indonesia, or in our own? The answer is drugs. For a start, where do the drugs come from, mainly land tilled by some of the poorest people in the world. It could be Afghanistan, it could be Colombia. What makes people want to grow the necessary plants? The need to make swift money, though not nearly as much as the people who will be trafficking and refining the product along the way. In a religious state like Afghanistan, and under their previous governments, people have had to scrap, grub up, their subsistence farming methods, which are far healthier for them and others, and produce one deadly cash crop. This is often under pressure from those above, either in the form of governments or traffickers. All making money out of it. With this comes complete dependency on one crop and those who market it. As we can see in places like Mexico it is again the poorest often who suffer at the hands of gangs (cartels), who themselves are often made up of the poorest people in the country. Given a false form of pride in money and being able to threaten people with a gun. A way of life that doesn't just arise in Latin America, but can be seen on the streets of Chicago and even our own cities and towns.

The earth, their land, is ruined by a single repeated crop. Lives are ruined all the way along the route of the drug, until we find that most of the people in our own prisons, and affecting women (and their children) especially, are there because of drugs, as well as some form of mental illness. The two may well be linked.

Those who make the most money are often the richest few, and even in some cases governments.

We can link directly the cry of the opium farmer trapped in a single crop, to the woman in one of our prisons, and the increasingly damaged earth.

All this is before we even look at the damage our way of life, and the emissions it creates, does to the atmosphere and the affects that has on the climate, so that again Cafod is calling for help with a drought in East Africa, floods in Pakistan, even forcing us (though it is debatable whether this is a real solution) to build walls here to preserve our own town.

At the same time the people we are trying to fly to Rwanda are those who have fled here as a result of much of this very same process.

In the gospel Jesus is trying to open the eyes of his listeners to a number of things. But one is that it is the least likely people (often to our minds) who are those who actually do the will of God. See our duty to thank God for what we have. That there is a great equality amongst us all in the eyes of God. We could substitute for the Samaritan in the gospel, a woman in prison, an opium grower, a drug trafficker, a cartel heavy. Any of those we so easily blame for the problems of the world today.

But Jesus is asking us all to understand our equality, or, in the Pope's phrase, our interconnectedness, not just with each other, but with the very land that we stand upon. What we do affects each of us and our planet.

We can help these others in many ways, just as we can easily condemn some of them. But what we need to understand is that we are indeed stewards of God's creation. All of us. Equally. We are bound together by God's creating love.