

Faith and Nature

Minister Catherine Martin's words at the launch of *Nature Praising God* by Fr Dermot Lane, published by Messenger Publications, link climate, faith and justice issues.



When creating the world God abundantly provided everything needed to sustain life. However, it is clear today that God's creation is groaning under the burden of injustice, greed, and self-destruction.

In this book, Father Dermot investigates in detail the relationship between faith and nature, in the many different ways nature praises God and nature loves God, and explores the different beliefs associated with nature and its praise and love of God. He also articulately and passionately outlines how

a change in attitude towards nature is necessary. And inspires the reader to allow their faith to guide their love of nature, and respect of nature.

One of our core values as Christians is to be stewards of God's creation, to care for the earth - to care for each other. As Christians we need to sow a seed of joy and hope for all those who are suffering. We need to reach out with compassion to those in need but also to identify the roots of injustice and chaos. This is a tremendous responsibility as we are facing problems that

we've never seen before. However, each of us is duty bound to do what we can. The urgent global and catastrophic challenge that climate change presents is something that we simply cannot turn away from. We can never have it said that we stood idly by, that we did anything less than our level best to secure our children's safety and future. As the old Indian proverb goes: "Only after the last tree has been cut down, only after the last river has been poisoned, only after the last fish has been caught, only then will you find that money cannot be eaten". Surely mankind cannot let this come to pass.

This book serves to inspire us to love nature, and to cherish our environment. By restoring our biodiversity, by protecting and conserving our natural resources, and by pursuing ecological principles, we are in turn taking climate action. We are reducing our emissions as a country, we are leaving our world in a fit state for future generations. Similarly, by taking climate action, by pursuing a net-zero society, we are protecting our biodiversity and protecting nature. Each environmental principle does not exist in isolation. They exist together and are complementary to each other.

Similar to this connection between climate and nature is the inherent link between protecting our environment and our quest for social justice and to tackle inequality. At their core, both involve protecting our planet and its people for generations to come. Ensuring that no one is left behind as we move forward together.

Therefore, hand in hand with climate justice must come social justice. Both are intrinsically linked. These are not just partners; they are one together—



and you cannot have one without the other.

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We cannot hope to convince people of the need for climate justice if we deny them a place in our society – and by place, I mean a home; a strong education; stability; security; a stake in our new greener society with a good quality of life for everyone.

The link between climate action, and its important role in global justice cannot be overlooked either. The climate catastrophe impacts the global south and the poorest first. We, in the developed world, have contributed most to climate change. Therefore, it is our duty to do the most we possibly can to tackle climate change, do our fair share.



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power to renew, reform and deepen our understanding of Christian liturgy in the 21st century.'

And here tonight I am reminded of just how powerful an ally the environmental movement has in faith communities. Indeed, Christianity has always been concerned with the environment and we cannot underestimate the value of faith communities in promoting a more ecologically and socially just and sustainable future. This is 'living' the scripture - giving praise to God for the gift of this world and treating it with love. Actions always speak louder than words and that is why it is wonderful to see more and more religious groups actively emphasising ecological protection and acting on these beliefs in very practical ways. Religion is central to hundreds of millions of people's lives in one way or another and communities of faith can make a monumental difference in shaping society. I've heard it said that we should "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world: indeed it is the only thing that ever has. Yes, it is the little things in life that can cause some difficulty and division. But it is in the big things in life, the immense challenges such as climate change, where we can be as one.

We cannot allow ourselves to pretend that we here in Ireland can continue to pursue economic growth at all costs, at the expense of those most vulnerable in the world. By taking radical and transformative climate action, we are protecting the lives and the livelihoods of those in the global south. This is global justice, this is social justice, and this is climate justice. As Christians, these principles go right to the very core of who we are.

In teasing out the journey towards a theology of the natural world Fr Dermot concludes 'that nature praising God makes sense spiritually, liturgically, theologically and eschatologically. For this to happen a culture of care and gratitude must replace the contemporary culture of profit. As such, the much neglected presence of creation praising God in the natural world has