

SEASON OF CREATION 2018

HIKOI KOTAHI: WALKING TOGETHER

Once a year these days, from September 1, world day of prayer for creation, to October 4, feast day of Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology, Christians around the world take time out to deepen their relationship with God, with each other and with all creation. The Season of Creation, which began in 1989 through the efforts of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of the Orthodox Church and which has since been endorsed by Pope Francis, is now embraced by the wider ecumenical family.

A group of nine church leaders, including Cardinal Peter Turkson who leads the Vatican's office for Promoting Integral Human Development, has issued an invitation to their faith communities to join in this year's season in whatever way seems appropriate.

"We invite you to join us on a journey of faith that challenges and rewards us with fresh perspective and deeper bonds of love," says their joint statement. "United in our sincere wish to protect creation, we join hands across denominations as sisters and brothers in Christ. We walk together towards greater stewardship of our place in creation."

You can join in the spirit of this season by inviting others to share with you the prayer that concludes this reflection, or by joining online in the ecumenical prayer service for creation (see SeasonofCreation.org) which begins at Assisi and concludes in Katowice, Poland, site of the global climate talks known as COP24, the next vital step towards implementing the Paris Agreement.

Mercy Day, September 24

In the midst of this Season of Creation, Mercy people around

the globe will pause on Monday 24 September to give thanks for the first House of Mercy, built in Baggot St, Dublin, through the efforts of Catherine

McAuley and opened in 1827. In no time, it became the centre for Mercy's ministries of loving service, as she and her walking sisters went in search of the poor and sick in the city's streets.

The house provided classrooms and skills training for

girls and young women, accommodation for those in need of shelter, an infirmary for the sick, a home for colleagues drawn by Catherine's spirit to share in her vision and work, and a chapel where God's

providential grace could be sought and celebrated. Today the house is a centre for Mercy International Association and a place of pilgrimage and renewal for all who want to drink afresh from the wellsprings that Catherine's legacy has left.

Mercy Day is celebrated around the world in a variety of ways, with ceremonies to acknowledge Mercy's accomplishments and hopes, with hospitality for friends and associates. Find out from a Mercy ministry close to you what plans have been made for Mercy Day on September 24, and see if there is something in which you can share.



Image: Mercy International Association © 2016



*Facsimile of Baggot St red doors,
open to all who come in need.*

Feast of St Francis, patron of the environment

St Francis is honoured in the whole Christian community – by Catholics and non-Catholics alike – for his love of all living creatures and his ability to see God in the whole of creation. His feast on Oct 4 marks the close of this special season, and faith leaders from around the world will come together at Assisi to reflect on how St Francis has informed their spiritual journey and inspired their month-long journey together.

The saint has been a source of inspiration to the present pope, who took the name of Francis as he began his task as leader of the Catholic community. From St Francis, he has drawn two of the great themes of his time as pope – a practical love for the poor, and a deep commitment to caring for Earth as our common home. The pope’s encyclical letter on care for the environment bears the title *Laudato Si’*, the first words of a canticle by St Francis, praising God through our sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us,’ (LS, par 1).

Il Poverello, the little poor man of Assisi, is remembered for the vision in which he heard the crucified Jesus calling him, “Francis, go and rebuild my church.” Though his prayer and lifestyle, Francis

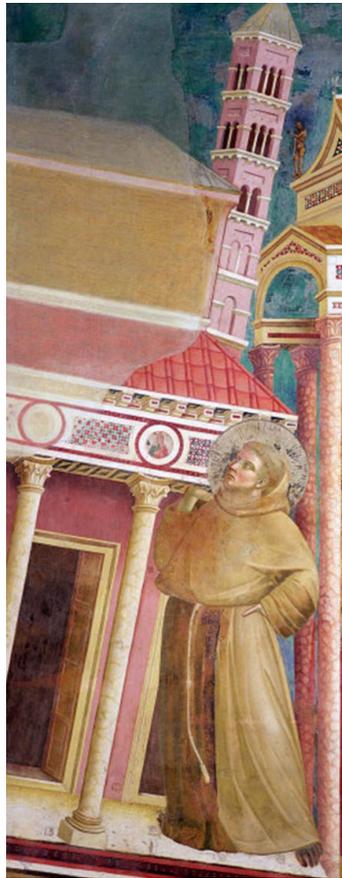
realised that it was not a church of bricks and mortar he was being called to repair, but the community of believers, living stones that needed to be transformed by the power of the gospel and the message of Jesus. Like his namesake, Pope

Francis has committed himself to rebuilding the church of our time, working to fashion a church of the poor, for the poor.

He insists that in our world, to pursue the common good we need to make “a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters.” To do so, we must remember “the immense dignity of the poor” who are so often the first victims of the damage being done to the world’s environment. Echoing the insistence of Catherine McAuley that the poor need our help today, not tomorrow, Pope Francis writes in his encyclical, “Let us not only keep the poor of the future in mind, but also today’s poor, whose life on this earth is brief and who cannot keep on waiting.” (LS, par 125)

As we celebrate the feast of St Francis on October 4, may our eyes be opened to new ways of serving the poor and vulnerable through the ministries of Mercy in which we are privileged to share.

– Dennis Horton



Giotto, detail of
Dream of Innocent III.

He Inoi: Prayer

*E te Atua, hau taiao,
God, breath of the universe:
as we celebrate this Season of Creation,
inspire us to cherish the resources
you have given us to nurture all life.*

*Renew our faith that there is enough
for all our needs, if we but share well
what you have bestowed in abundance.*

*May Mercy Day this year be
a time for us to give generously
from the mercies we have received
in this land of plenty.*

*May St Francis teach us again
that it is in giving that we receive,
and in dying to our poorer selves
that we find life and riches for all.*