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The Call to Mercy in Our Times

Thus, for me, the call to live mercy was and continues to be grounded in experience. It is fired by the hunger of the one in five Aboriginal children in my country who will not have a meal today, by the plight of asylum seekers on Manus Island Papua New Guinea and Nauru as well as in Australian mainland detention centres who look for mercy where there is often none to be found. It is founded on the alarming loss of biodiversity in our world, on the plight of the Great Barrier Reef and coral reefs across the globe, on the pollution of seas and waterways.

The pain of the Earth informs a contemporary theology of mercy and impels us to action, since mercy in the biblical tradition is always action-oriented. The distress of our planet invites us to live mercy and to view Earth's diverse elements as potential agents of the blessing of mercy.

The introduction to Pope Francis' recent Encyclical *Laudato Si'* identifies Earth as "among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor"

(LS 2), thus placing Earth itself among those for whom we are invited to have particular concern. In the first chapter of *Laudato Si'* entitled "What is Happening to our Common Home," the pope offers the whole human community an insightful description of the pain of the planet (LS 17-61).

Pollution and climate change, the issue of water, loss of biodiversity, decline in the quality of human life and global inequality are addressed in turn. The repeated critique of anthropocentrism or human self-centredness and concomitant destructive behaviour of our species claims our attention and impels us to mercy. The release of *Laudato Si'* on June 18, 2015, was "book-ended", as it were, by the pope's announcement on April 11 of an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy and its launch on December 8*. Our planetary home, the home of all Earth beings, is crying out for the healing that comes from compassion and mercy.

*Ref: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html. Accessed 24/6/2015.

Excerpt from: *The Blessing of Mercy – Bible Perspectives and Ecological Challenges* by Veronica M Lawson. Published 2015.

REFLECTION

- > In what way is the Earth "maltreated"?
- > How can we show mercy to the created world?