

OPENING COLLECT

Almighty God, you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image: teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things, now and for ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: Genesis 1.1 – 2.3

1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. 6 And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' 7 So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. 8 God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. 9 And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

11 Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it.

13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. 14 And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. 16 God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. 17 God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. 20 And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.' 21 So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' 23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. 24 And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.'

And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 26 Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' And God saw that it was good. 27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' 29 God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. 31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. 1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. 2 And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Notes: First reading-

Scholars tend to talk about two 'creation narratives' in Genesis. This is the first, written after the other one (Gen.2.4b on.), probably in the C.6th. There were many such stories about creation around in the area, used to give some account of how things came to be the way they are. This one seems to be rhythmic, and was, perhaps, used in worship. So far as we are concerned, it should not be approached as a 'scientific' and accurate explanation; it will not answer the questions we ask today! However, this does not make it less important for Christians, because it says some very significant things about the world and our place within it. **First**, it asserts that this is God's world and that everything takes its life from him, **secondly**, it asserts that the world, which God created and in which we are set, is a good world, and **thirdly**, it asserts that humanity is to exercise 'dominion' over the world.

SECOND READING: Romans 8.18-25

18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; 20 for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, 21 in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; 23 and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Epistle continued:

Gospel: Matthew 6.25-34

Jesus taught his disciples, saying: 25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? 28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you –you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.'

Continued:

Dominion is an important word here. It does not imply that the world is simply here for our benefit; that we can exploit it, as of right, but rather that we are to exercise sensitive rule over it; to take responsibility for its well-being, like any good ruler in society.

In the passage from **Romans**, Paul brings out what this dominion means. The creation has waited for this moment. Salvation is about being rid of the things that hinder fullness of life, and this is true not just for us, but for all the created world. So Christians, as God's people, must work, not just to release the potential in the lives of others, but to care for creation in such a way that its potential, also, is realised. Looking round the world at the moment, the task may seem daunting. There is so much need. The need for more food and water, for care over the environment, for the preservation of biological diversity and for better health. These are all difficult things to remedy, and humanity seems ill-fitted to the task. So where do we look for help?

This is where our Gospel passage comes in. Naive as it might sound to some, perhaps to many, a world, which needs so much help, needs love, above all. We are talking here of 'agapeh' love! If all lived by 'agapeh' love, that is, by love which is total, generous, and unselfish, a great deal more might be done to benefit one another and the world. For this love changes our whole outlook on life. Jesus understood this. We shall not achieve much if we are only worrying about our own situation; we cannot do much about the human condition on our own. However, Jesus suggests that if we 'seek first the Kingdom' then 'all these things will be given to you'. This, surely, is the challenge of our calling. Stop worrying about yourself and worry about others and the world in which we all live.

Post-Communion Collect

God our creator, by your gift the tree of life was set at the heart of the earthly paradise, and the bread of life at the heart of your Church: may we who have been nourished at your table on earth be transformed by the glory of the Saviour's cross and enjoy the delights of eternity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**