

Caring for the Earth Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time Friday, July 10, 2015
8:15 AM Gn 46:1-7, 28-30; **Mt 10:16-23** (We have to be consistently concerned with the present age and the present earth.)

“Amen, I say to you, ‘You will not finish the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.’”

This is a very important statement because it indicates the full humanity of Jesus. We believe **Jesus was fully God and fully human**, and that causes a lot of confusion in people’s minds. How can that be? Well, it’s a good question: How can that be? It’s very hard to put in so many words, but one way the Church puts this is **“He was like us in all things but sin.”** But that includes ignorance. Luke says that **“He grew in age and wisdom.”** Well he only had to grow in age and wisdom because he was like us in all things, and **human beings have to learn**. Human beings do not have a direct contact with the future, nor did Jesus.

He had a sense, an intuition, of the imminent end of the world. He really did. There are various passages, and the evangelists include this even though the evangelists knew that it isn’t the way it was going to happen. In other words, it’s not something the evangelists would ever make up because it’s embarrassing to say your leader was wrong. But indeed the Son of Man did not come in short order. Some of his statements indicate by the fall harvest, for example. Well, no, it didn’t. The end of the world did not come by the fall harvest. Elsewhere **Jesus says, “Only the Father knows these things,”** exempting himself, the Son, in his human nature from knowing what human beings normally don’t know, because otherwise he wouldn’t really be sharing our existence. **He came to share our worries, our concerns, our anxieties, our infirmities, our weaknesses.** All of this he bore. He couldn’t bear it if he knew how everything was going to work out. In fact he would not really be “faithful Son” if he knew how everything was going to work out. We have to see that **he was taking a risk in following what he believed to be the Father’s will**, never one hundred percent certain as no one can be one hundred percent certain of what God is saying. And those who are one hundred percent certain are also insane, and that you can be sure of.

So Jesus came to be like us, to endure our uncertainty, our frailty, our infirmities, everything we are and have. And he shared it completely. And in the midst of this of course **he did know the Father’s heart, and he came to share that with us as well**, the heart of the Father, that we would know God. But **knowing God is not knowing facts.** Knowing

God is not knowing the future. He wanted to introduce to us his Father, our Father, that we would know him as we know intimately someone else, some **one** else, not a thing or a fact, but some **one**. **That's the whole idea of revelation, the disclosure of the heart of God.**

Now this has led of course to something: in the fact that early Christianity believed for some time—St. Paul also witnesses to this in 1 Thessalonians—**early Christianity** believed the world would end very soon, and intrinsic to Christian thinking is really more the **expectation of a new heaven and a new earth**, more than concern for this heaven and this earth, that is, the present age. That perhaps turns out to be an oversight, one already noted by St. Francis of Assisi in the beginning of the second millennium. That is why **St. John Paul II said St. Francis Assisi is the patron of the environment**, by which he means nature, the world we are living in, the earth, the air, the water, our environment. And when **our present pope**, Francis, took the name **Francis**, he was connecting to that concern for this world, for this nature, not the new heaven and the new earth exactly, but the present one and **our need to care for that and keep it, as was indeed the original instruction to Adam and Eve**, to care and keep the earth, not to overlook this.

Now one of the references here is “You will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans.” That’s one thing about **pagans, they did have concern for the earth**. They are rooted in the earth. Paganism is a natural thing. And we can actually learn to some degree from their concern for the earth, which is **one of the points made in the pope’s latest encyclical. We need to care for the earth**, and we have to recognize how degrading the earth is a moral degradation that is connected to the degradation of the human family, the moral fabric of society, politics, indeed everything. **Everything is connected**. So as believers in the resurrection of Christ and as believers that God is going to make a new heaven and a new earth, **we have to also be consistently concerned with the present age and the present earth**, and morally concerned about everything that is connected to it. And this is part of the witness referred to here. Witness does not have to be under duress. Witness can be freely given and freely offered.