

Theological introduction to «Reflections on Corona and Easter – Taking Care of Paradise»

10.8.2023 by Wolfgang Rehfus

Taking Care of Paradise

Reflection ahead of the Discernment Hui, by Wolfgang Rehfus

God created the world complete and perfect. That is the beginning and foundation of Christian faith. According to the book of Genesis, God created mankind for the sole purpose of taking care of the paradise we all live in. We are put in charge of it directly by God and it is our responsibility to maintain and to take care of it. Christian Churches and traditions are rightly focused on Jesus Christ. However, many appear to have difficulties in understanding the message brought to us by Jesus and it seems that some prefer more or less to rather ignore or downplay the very first words, the very first commandments given to mankind.

Three years ago, the world was put into the first Corona Lockdown. We were put into self-isolation for a few weeks. On that Easter Sunday, I wrote "Reflections on Corona and Easter", and later expanded on this piece with a Bible study on Genesis and beyond, and published it together with the short final chapter 'You are Guardians' on SolarPeace.org (https://SolarPeace.org/e/20200412_CoronaEaster.htm). You might like to read these reflections yourself, ponder them, and draw your own conclusions for your individual life.

Our relationship with God started before He created us to carry

out our God given vocation to "Take care of paradise". I believe this is a fundamental aspect of Jesus' other commandments: Love the Lord your God, Love your neighbour, and Love one another. All this is only possible with the love of God in our hearts: *For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son* (John 3:16).

To fully accept the first commandment(s) spoken by God has consequences. It may be tough and difficult for some; it may require us to overcome egoistic thinking; it may demand we change long time habits, opinions, world views or even political views. However, as a church, as part of the global "universal and ecumenical Christian church" (*translated as the "Holy Catholic Church" in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds*), we cannot continue to sing Halleluiah and praise God in the Upper Room without doing our God-given homework to "Take care of the paradise" in the ground floor. Such a church would be built on sand and mainly pay holy lip service (*which might be a reason why many flock away from churches worldwide...*). The Anglican "Season of Discernment" and the upcoming Discernment Hui provides a good opportunity to reflect on how we relate to God's creation, and live up to our vocation of taking care of paradise.

This short introduction «Taking care of Paradise - Reflection ahead of the Discernment Hui, by Wolfgang Rehfus», as reprinted on the left side, had been published in the PEW NEWS of The Anglican Parish of Golden Bay on 11 June 2023.

Our God-given vocation to «Taking care of Paradise»^{*)} as explained on SolarPeace.org (https://SolarPeace.org/e/20200412_CoronaEaster.htm), a Bible study on the book of Genesis and beyond, had just about no relevance 2000 years ago at the time of Jesus Christ or 500 years ago at the time of Martin Luther's Protestant Reformation, but today it is basically the number one issue worldwide. So, we need to ask ourselves why the very first three commandments of the Bible are not in our consciousness, why are they not in the focus and in the mission of most churches?

Today, we literally live in biblical times, as the prophets have spoken for a long time, but the people didn't listen, still don't listen (not enough anyway), and recently many people even turned backwards, were falling into temptations to follow more egoistic and more nationalistic so-called conservative views and recently popped-up groups, which only intend to 'conserve' their own current lifestyle instead of conserving and taking care of God's Creation. However, God's Creation does include rules, the so-called laws of creation, unchangeable. For example, smoking does damage a person's health. While one-time smoking may be tolerated and the damage repaired by our magnificently created organism/body, we all know that heavy long-term smoking will lead to irreversible damage and worse. Similarly, the same is true large scale with globally catastrophic consequences, if we keep doing what we all (mankind) are currently doing (e.g. burning fossil resources, producing greenhouse gases and radioactivity, toxic pollution and waste, or other non-sustainable human activities).

We live in a time, where taking care of nature and our environment is and becomes increasingly more important, also because it is the foundation of life for all people on Earth. Therefore, to «Love the Lord your God», to «Love your neighbour» and to «Love one another» must include to take care of nature and our environment, otherwise our love and our help for people is short-sighted.

«For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son.» (John 3:16, Good News Bible) ... «Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. My Father will love those who love me; I too will love them and reveal myself to them.» (John 14:21, Good News Bible) ... «In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the word was God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him» (John 1:1-3, Good News Bible) ^{)} ... see Jesus' first words to mankind.*