

Address at Interfaith Gathering, Truro Cathedral, 10th June on eve of the G7 World Leaders Meeting at Carbis Bay, Cornwall.

As the local Catholic Bishop – Bishop Mark based in Plymouth – I want to say thank you on behalf of us all:

- To the Lord Mayor and the Civic authorities locally for all that they are doing in this challenging time.
- To Bishop Philip, the Dean, and the team here at Truro Cathedral for facilitating our meeting.
- And especially our thanks to CAFOD for bringing us all together at this important moment.

In a monastery, a young monk was asked to assist his elder brother in going to the Chapel for Morning Prayers. He arrived ten minutes early to find the older brother sitting outside his room gazing over a field. The next morning, he came twenty minutes earlier and the older man was still sitting outside. And the next day the same – each time coming earlier, always finding the older brother outside. Eventually the young monk came an hour early, and seeing his older brother gazing over the field, he asked him, “Father, why do I always find you sitting outside no matter how early I arrive?” The old monk replied, “Before going to praise my Lord in the Chapel and in the Book of His Word, I must Praise Him in the Book of His Creation”.

Many of us gathering this evening are people of faith. We desire to protect God’s beautiful creation, and care more fully for our poorer brothers and sisters. We join with people of no faith, people of good will, who hold with us, that the earth is our common home. It is entrusted to the whole human family, to be protected and passed on to future generations. We stand together to listen more attentively to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

It is, of course, the poorest of our brothers and sisters who experience disproportionately, the negative impact of the exploitation of the earth’s resources. The global pandemic has taught us, that “we are all in the same boat”¹, to use a phrase of Pope Francis. One person’s problems are the problems of all. “We have an obligation to ensure that every person lives with

¹ Fratelli Tutti #32

dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her integral development”². Each of us is called to take concrete steps – from reducing consumption to working for change – to better care for our world.

Care of our common home is not only a summons to profound ‘interior conversion’ but also a call to a ‘community conversion’. It is to be a lasting change of heart. We need to encourage individuals of all ages to take their own personal action, in solidarity with the poorest and most disadvantaged.

Religious leaders are particularly called to be at the service of fraternity in our world. It is good for us to stand and speak together this evening. We must find other occasions, too, to speak with one another and to act together for the common good and the promotion of the poor.³ You will know that Pope Francis has called for the development of a global community of fraternity⁴. A world where dignity is valued and respected through concrete actions is not just a dream but a path to a better future.⁵

So, G7 leaders – my brothers and sisters, too – we welcome you to our beautiful part of the world and we hope you enjoy your stay here. Having spent some days here, may you go on to work more diligently for the care of our common home, and for the dignity of the poorest. We pray that you will seize this opportunity “to convert the current model of global development”⁶ and its focus on growth and consumption into a model more respectful of creation and the integral human development of all present and future peoples. For ourselves, we pray that we may care for our common home, may care for all our brothers and sisters, with a greater love for all that the Lord has created and Praise Him in all that we behold.

Thank you.

+Mark O’Toole
Bishop of Plymouth

² Fratelli Tutti #118

³ Fratelli Tutti #282

⁴ Fratelli Tutti #154

⁵ Let us dream p 132

⁶ Benedict XVI, Angelus, 12 September 2006.