**CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME**

I would like to take up the conclusion of Pope Francis’s *World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation,* in 2016.

The Christian life involves the practice of the traditional seven corporal and seven spiritual works of mercy.

The corporal works of mercy are feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, visiting the sick, visiting the imprisoned, and burying the dead.

The spiritual works of mercy are counselling the doubtful, instructing the ignorant, admonishing sinners, consoling the afflicted, forgiving offenses, bearing patiently those who do us ill, praying for the living and the dead.

We usually think of the works of mercy individually and in relation to a specific initiative, such as hospitals for the sick, soup kitchens for the hungry, shelters for the homeless, schools for those to be educated, the confessional and spiritual direction for those needing counsel and forgiveness. But if we look at the works of mercy as a whole, we see that the object of mercy is human life itself and everything it embraces.

Obviously, human life itself and everything it embraces includes care for our common home. So, Pope Francis proposed a complement to the two traditional sets of seven works of mercy. He wrote, “May the works of mercy also include *care for our common home*.

As a corporal work of mercy, care for our common home requires simple daily gestures that break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness and makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.

As a spiritual work of mercy, care for our common home calls for a grateful contemplation of God’s world, which allows us to discover in each thing a teaching that God wishes to hand on to us.

Despite our sins and the daunting challenges before us, we never lose heart. The Creator does not abandon us. God never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us, for God has united himself definitively to our earth, and God’s love constantly impels us to find new ways forward. In a particular way, let us pray:

O God of the poor,  
help us to rescue the abandoned   
and forgotten of this earth,  
who are so precious in your eyes.

God of love, show us our place in this world  
as channels of your love   
for all the creatures of this earth.  
God of mercy, may we receive your forgiveness   
and convey your mercy throughout our common home. Praise be to you! Amen.