



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES

Letter to Secondary Schools for Pentecost 2021

Dear Young People,

Pentecost reminds us that everything in existence, every person and the whole of creation, is a gift of 'God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth'. God our loving Father creates and continues to give life to the world through His Word, Jesus Christ, in the power of His Holy Spirit. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church, which we celebrate at Pentecost, is not something separate from Creation. God's revelation of Himself in Creation is inseparable from the revelation of His love for us in Christ and in His desire to live in us through His Holy Spirit.

'God's Spirit is always and everywhere "the Lord, the Giver of Life", and the voice of Pentecost is echoed in the voice of creation'. As God's children, we call on the Spirit to 'renew the face of the Earth', and as His children, we are called for the good of all that brings life. Our world, God's creation, is a precious gift to us. It is our common home entrusted to each generation. Consider this: how have we used this gift? How do we honour this precious gift? Are we really demonstrating love, care and respect for our common home?

As we celebrate Pentecost this year, we are very aware of the damage that continues to be inflicted on the Earth, and the repercussions for the well-being of our brothers and sisters, both here in our own countries and, more especially, in the poorest countries of our world. Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have both taught us that everything is interconnected and interdependent. The way we live our everyday lives has an impact on everyone and on the earth.

The urgency of the situation, and the enormity of the challenges we face, have spurred us to speak out together this Pentecost Sunday, as bishops of England, Wales and Scotland, about the role that the Catholic Church and our faith must play in our shared care for God's gift to us.

For all too long we have either been ignorant of, or ignored, the exploitation of our planet and the unsustainable consumption of its resources. While accepting the need and demand for energy for the benefit of the very poorest, providing our energy must, nonetheless, be by means which significantly reduces the use of carbon-based fuels.

There must be a new global understanding of our world, where nations recognise our common responsibility for the dignity of all people and their rights to sustainable livelihoods and freedoms. Pope Francis encourages us to look beyond our own needs to the needs of all, most especially the poor and the marginalised.

But we cannot leave the healing of our common home and the wellbeing and care of our brothers and sisters merely to businesses and political leaders. Our own local concern and action is necessary and has far-reaching consequences. We all have a part to play; each and every one of us, in the routines, choices and decisions of our everyday lives and our aspirations for the future. The actions of parishes, families, schools, and individuals will have a big impact on our efforts to restore our common home. There are now many resources to advise us on our choice of food, saving of water and electricity, suggestions about travel, waste, and re-using materials. These are measures that everyone can employ, in some degree, with minimal inconvenience and change so that we can each reaffirm our vocation to be stewards of creation.

This Pentecost comes at a time of great opportunity. We are gradually emerging from the pandemic. Now we have the ability to make changes. Our countries are also hosting two of the most important political events this year: the G7 summit in June and the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP26 in November. These meetings will gather together men and women who have the power to make defining choices and policies which will help us to repair and rebuild, provide what is needed for our brothers and sisters, and take care of our common home.

In all our endeavours, we need the presence of the Holy Spirit, 'the Lord, the Giver of Life', whose gift to the Church and the world we celebrate again at Pentecost. Let us keep this Feast with hope that we can begin to repair the damage we have done and provide a healthy home for future generations. Our hope will be strengthened by our prayer. May our constant request be that the Holy Spirit guide us, strengthen our resolve and 'renew the face of the earth'.