



✠ **Bosco MacDonald**
Bishop of Clifton

Pastoral Letter for The Season of Creation
Sunday 6 September 2026

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

During my recent recovery after a heart procedure, I found myself walking much more slowly than usual. At first, I found that rather frustrating. But then something unexpected happened. I began noticing things I had hurried past for years: birds singing early in the morning, sunlight through the trees, leaves moving in the breeze, the extraordinary colours of an ordinary garden. It struck me that perhaps nothing had changed except me. The world had always been proclaiming the glory of God. I had simply been too busy to notice.

At the beginning of this month the Church entered the Season of Creation, from 1 September until the Feast of St Francis of Assisi on 4 October. This year we also have the new *Mass for the Care of Creation*, approved by Pope Leo XIV and added to the Roman Missal.

Care for creation is sometimes presented as though it were a recent concern of the Church. In fact, it reaches back to the first words of Scripture: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* The Psalms summon sun and moon, mountains and rivers, animals and peoples to praise their Creator. St Augustine wrote that God's creation is like a great book in which we can recognise the hand of its author. St Francis sang of Brother Sun and Sister Moon.

This year that tradition has a particular resonance. We are celebrating a special Year of St Francis, proclaimed by Pope Leo to mark the 800th anniversary of the saint's death. The Church's decree describes 2026 as the culmination of recent Franciscan centenaries, including those of the crib at Greccio, the Stigmata and the *Canticle of the Creatures*. St Francis loved creation because he loved Christ. He saw the created world as God's handiwork and therefore as something to receive with gratitude rather than simply possess.

Pope Leo has spoken of the need for a *"contemplative gaze"* which changes our relationship with creation. Today's Psalm puts it more simply: *"O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts."* Perhaps that is where the real challenge lies. A heart which loses its capacity for gratitude soon loses its desire to care. The prophet Ezekiel reminds us today of the responsibility of the watchman.

Christians cannot simply look away when creation is damaged, particularly when the consequences fall most heavily upon the poor.

The theme for this year's Season of Creation comes from Isaiah: *"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks."* Those words have a particular urgency when war continues to destroy lives, communities and the land itself. St Francis understood that peace with God, peace with our neighbour and reverence for God's creation belong together. His example invites us to become witnesses of that peace ourselves.

St Paul gives us the foundation for all of this in today's second reading: *"Love is the fulfilling of the law."* Christian care for creation springs from love for God and love for our neighbour, including those who will inherit the world after us.

And this brings us to the Eucharist. Pope Francis wrote in *Laudato Si'*: *"The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation."* This is deeply rooted in our Catholic tradition. At every Mass we bring to the altar bread and wine, *fruit of the earth and work of human hands*. These gifts of creation are offered to God and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, become for us the Body and Blood of Christ. As Pope Benedict taught, in the Eucharist creation is drawn towards its fulfilment in the Creator.

So perhaps our response during this Season of Creation can begin quite simply. Give thanks for food rather than taking it for granted. Waste a little less. Teach children to marvel at the natural world. Walk a little more slowly and notice what is around us. And when we come before the Blessed Sacrament, remember that the Lord whom we adore is the One through whom all things were made.

My brothers and sisters, the world does not belong to us. It belongs to God. We receive it as a gift, hold it in trust for a little while, and hand it on to those who come after us. During this Season of Creation, and in this Year of St Francis, may the Holy Spirit renew in us a sense of wonder. May we learn again to see creation with the eyes of faith, to give thanks to the Creator, and to care more faithfully for the beautiful world he has entrusted to us.

With my prayers and every blessing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bosco' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rt Revd Bosco MacDonald
Bishop of Clifton

To be read and made available on the weekend of the 5/6 September 2026