

May I speak in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I've received a number of messages this week from different friends who are aware of the recent flooding of the river Nile in Sudan. I'm not aware that it's made the national news here, but there has been the worst flooding there for over 100 years. Continuous rain has led to serious flooding in at least 16 different states, affecting over 700,000 people, destroying three hundred thousand homes, and killing over three hundred people.

The people most affected are the poorest people who live in houses that are least able to stand against the floods. However our national news *has* mentioned the extensive wildfires in the American west, fires which are earlier in the year and more extensive than ever before.

Although untangling the weather conditions from climate crisis is complicated, it's clear that overall in recent years, and I quote, "fire risk is increasing dramatically because of climate change", so said Chris Field who directs the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment.

Global heating has given rise to drier, hotter conditions and more frequent extreme droughts that have left the landscape tinder dry and prone to explosive blazes. Although California's landscape has long been prone to fire, climate crisis has put pressure on the entire system, Field said, throwing it out of balance and giving rise to more extreme catastrophic events. The current fires expanding with such explosive force have burned more acreage within a few weeks than what has burnt in previous years.

Flooding in Sudan, and the fires in the American west, are just but two contemporary illustrations of the current global climate crisis. There was a time not all that long ago that there was a public debate about whether or not there was a global climate crisis. For me the evidence revealed in David Attenborough's documentary series on the BBC last year, the planet provided all the evidence that was needed.

The evidence is now all around us and yet on the 4th of November, a day after the presidential election, the US will formally withdraw from the Paris agreement on constraining global heating.

The gospel writer Matthew, today in verse 23, records Jesus as saying that the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wishes to settle accounts with his slaves. The king who has responsibility for the whole of the kingdom wanted to sort his affairs with his slaves, and then we learn of the king's generosity in releasing the huge debt of one slave who owed ten thousand talents, the equivalent of a whole life's earnings. But that same slave who had been freed from his debt had yet to learn that he too should act in the same generous manner, and so when he meets a fellow slave who owed him some money, rather than releasing him from his debt, as he himself had experienced, he did what he was legally entitled to do: took him to court and the fellow slave was put in prison.

In this story of the king and his slaves, Jesus is illustrating the principle of generous forgiveness to Peter who'd ask the question. Forgiving someone three times is what the pharisees would say was sufficient. Forgiving someone seven times is what the ideal set out in the Old Testament seem to be, and yet in verse 22 Jesus said to Peter "not seven times but I tell you 77 times".

In other words, consistently forgive. Always forgive. Habitually forgive. Normally, usually forgive. Forgive one another. Forgive those who have wronged you over many years. Forgive those who have been unfair to you. Forgive those who have been critical of you. Forgive those who have hurt you; those who have humiliated you; those who've criticised you. Forgive.

At a personal level this is an imperative which brings with it healing, restoration, and peace. At a structural, and a communal level, this enables us to focus on the possibilities of the future as opposed to the failures of the past.

In the past, and in the present, our free market economy has raped our planet and plundered its finite resources. It has brought us to the brink of the global disaster now staring us in the face.

So what are we to do? What are we to do?

Any crisis is an opportunity to embrace change. Today with our global climate crisis we have an opportunity to work and campaign and choose to think and behave differently; to campaign for carbon neutral living; to choose to make environmental priority decisions about our electricity and gas suppliers; our transport choices; our supermarket choices; to behave in ways that take our consumer power seriously.

*We can* influence and persuade business companies and the economy by our personal choices and our financial decisions.

In recent years I've learned about the impact on our environment of eating red meat. I personally like red meat, but I choose to eat less of it now than I once did.

In recent years I've learned about the impact on our environments of international travel by plane. I love traveling by plane but I've chosen to do it less, to help secure the planet's future for my grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Each one of us can take a stand and make choices. Some of us might also campaign and sign petitions and even go on marches, but each one of us can research where our money is currently invested and ensure that it is supporting activity which is good for our planet.

Each one of us can assess the impacts on the environment of the use of our car or the contents of our weekly shopping basket. I believe that as humanity across all continents, we need to forgive our forebears who utilised the world's resources with little, if any, regard of sustainability.

Of course not only our ancestors. We need a new economic order which takes into account human and global consequences, and not just the profit made by shareholders.

Our present economic model is quite broken. We know that, from the increasing gulf between those who have money and those who have next to nothing. As I acknowledge my guilt and sin in being complicit in supporting an economic system that privileges me and keeps my neighbour in poverty and the earth ravaged, I hear Jesus say not seven times but 77 times "I must forgive", and not only with words but with meaningful action: actions that can make right my, our failures.

So I end up praying "Lord have mercy, lord have mercy, have mercy on the whole of humanity", as we create, and seek, fairer ways of living; ways of living which are kind to each other; kind to our world, acknowledging that my flourishing is deeply, profoundly, interconnected with the flourishing of my sisters and brothers, and indeed the whole of the created order. Amen.