

Good Afternoon, my name is Tim Barrett. I have been a parishioner at St. Ignatius since my childhood, and recently was named to the Parish Pastoral Council.

Today's readings – how appropriate to have the Genesis Creation story right after we celebrated the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, our patron saint of the animals and the environment, on Friday!

After today's readings, three questions resonated in my mind. *First: "What is God calling each of us to do regarding God's creation, our earth?"*

God gives an answer to this question in the Genesis story: **Have DOMINION over the Earth**- "*the power to influence or direct people's behavior or course of events*". DOMINION is an ACTIVE verb. We get a sense of what ACTIVE means in our second reading from Paul to Timothy: we are to "**stir into flame the gift of God**". DOMINION is not passive. It is not about a "**spirit of cowardice**." It is not about the "inaction" and "ignorance" that our Deacon spoke about last week at this mass – story of Lazarus and the rich man.

It is about "**power and love and self-control**"; it often requires us to "**bear our share of hardship**". Today's Gospel from Luke reiterates **responsibility - Duty** (another ACTIVE verb): through the story of the master (God) who has expectations of the servant (us). **Do our DUTY**.

So God is clear as the "light of day" he created on the FIRST DAY on what we are called to do with Earth: be active and dutiful in dominion of our Earth.

My second question, HOW do we have dominion in time of such political and ideological divisiveness?

I want to tell you a story that illustrates for me HOW this is not so easy in our present time.

This past Labor Day weekend, our family visited distant relatives in Ohio meeting them for the first time. They are really nice people, the hosts have a simple cozy home and everyone created a very warm evening to get to know each other.

One of them, I'll call him Joe, is an instrument specialist at an agricultural company in California. *He described how the effects of weather have been impacting crop production.*

The other, I'll call him Ed, is a retired physicist who lives a short walk from Lake Erie. *He discussed how there has recently been problematic shoreline erosion because Lake Erie does not freeze as it used to.*

Interestingly, they each proclaimed themselves to be politically conservative and took great care to preface their stories by saying **"I am not saying this is climate change or anything..."** What struck my wife and I was that it seemed so important for them to maintain their ideological views even as they provided examples that clearly contradicted those views. *Joe went on to say he does not believe in climate change. It is a liberal hoax.*

I left the evening mulling what I should have done. It would have been rude to point out this contradiction. I'm also not sure that challenging their viewpoint would have made any difference in this divisive time. At the same time, I know that it **does not really matter to the Earth what our ideological views are.** We need to be on the same "team" in this effort to care for our Earth. Since then, a few things have occurred in the past month to continue informing my thoughts on this question.

First, the Parish sponsored several excellent events in September. The Green Team had a panel on Climate Change. One panelist explained: **Climate change is not a question of belief – whether one's political or economic views are right or wrong. Climate change is a question of understanding. The goal on climate change is we need to understand what is occurring.** This was further emphasized when Fr. O'Keefe spoke at the Parish about the *Jesuit Universal Apostolic Preferences (what the Society sees as the most significant issues it must focus on TODAY)*. "Caring for the Common Home", closely tied to Pope Francis' exhortations in "Laudato Si" is one of the four preferences. Fr. O'Keefe shared a boatload of statistics, especially about how the sea level is rising slowly but surely along the Atlantic coast. Many of you I am sure read The Boston Globe expose on changes in climate on Cape Cod last Sunday?

Then, last weekend, I listened to two stirring testimonies by youth on the environment. Greta Thunberg, spoke to the United Nations. She expressed her ANGER and SADNESS that adults, "who look to children for Hope", are putting business and political interests ahead of stewardship for the World. **"HOW DARE YOU"** she scolded us. Closer to home, a dear friend and fellow parishioner, Maria Rodrigues, circulated a

video of her son Jairam, who tragically died in a climbing accident this summer, testify last spring before the Boston City Council. *Jairam expressed a similar urgency in asking that Boston adopt a Zero emission plan on all new construction.*

WOW – climate changes is such a serious issue that our YOUTH are leading the way. On the whole, we adults have not had that **courage, love, and self-control** to **responsibly live our dominion** of the Earth as described in today's readings.

My final questions: *What are things I/possibly you can considering doing as we awaken to what we're allowing to happen to Mother Earth?* I could tell you I am going to quit my day job, become an activist and fight for our environment. That is not me and I don't think that's what God is calling me to do.

However, here are four practical things I think we all can do:

First, **seek to UNDERSTAND – be informed.** *This is serious stuff.* Get the facts. Vary our sources to avoid ideological bents. Keep on top of it. Frankly, between the Wall Street Journal and The Boston Globe that I read daily, there's a lot of content.

Second, **engage with ACTIVISM in a way that fits you.** I am not the type who will be leading rallies. I can, however, seek to understand and support the efforts, especially efforts of YOUTH such as the high school students that rallied at City Hall two weeks ago. I can also contact my local, state and federal reps to remind them how critical environmental policy is along with education and economic policy. I/We can be more actively engaged in a way that fits with our skills, talents, and resources.

Third, **change our BEHAVIORS and reduce our environmental footprint.** Beyond the recycling many of us already do, here are a few things our family started to do: stopped using artificial fertilizers on my lawn – it's still green, just a bit weedier; compost our food waste and don't put it in the trash and try to use fans more than A/C – two of the top ways a CNN article this past summer recommended to reduce CO2 emissions. I am trying to take the train to work and walk more than drive or use Uber. Most recently, though I do not like reading on computer screens I am trying to reduce how much paper I print out. The key is my **greater awareness of how my small actions effect things**, and that **accepting some discomfort in changing habits** - a good thing.

Finally, **PRAY and HAVE FAITH**. We can all do this. The apostles ask Jesus to “Increase our Faith”. Paul gives us the simplest instructions how to at the end of the 2nd reading **“Guard this trust in Christ Jesus with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells with us”**. All things are possible with Faith. As Jesus said the faith the size of a mustard seed – just a little faith – can uproot the most rooted of trees – the mulberry. **The slightest of faith can change our world, our lives.**

Let us commit to **understanding, engaging, making changes in our lifestyles even if a bit of hardship**. Let us, **most importantly, have faith in the Holy Spirit** to guide us in the great responsibility that we have been given: **dominion over our Earth**.