

30th Oct

Halloween Horrors

I have to confess to being a curmudgeon about Halloween. It's the now-universal American version that disturbs me. The grotesque garden decorations in plastic and synthetic fabrics seem to proliferate each year. For me, it is enough to see nightly TV images of broken bodies in war zones without having to walk by skeletons, gravestones and blood spattered limbs throughout the neighbourhood. I acknowledge the Samhain traditions of warding off evil spirits and the therapeutic effect of simulating fear and making fun of it, so I won't be growling at the children when they come for Trick or Treat. I will however be hoping that environmental awareness around Halloween might eventually replace the American-export version.

The following may make Halloween less scary for the planet.

- Costumes: re-use, swap, buy in charity shops or make your own
- Pumpkin: don't throw them away - try pumpkin soup, pumpkin hummus, pumpkin pie, or roasted pumpkin seeds in granola
- Decorations: re-use each year; make new ones from natural materials, such as dried leaves, sticks and natural fabrics
- Sweet Wrappers: make sure they all go in the recycling bin



23rd Oct

Action and Contemplation

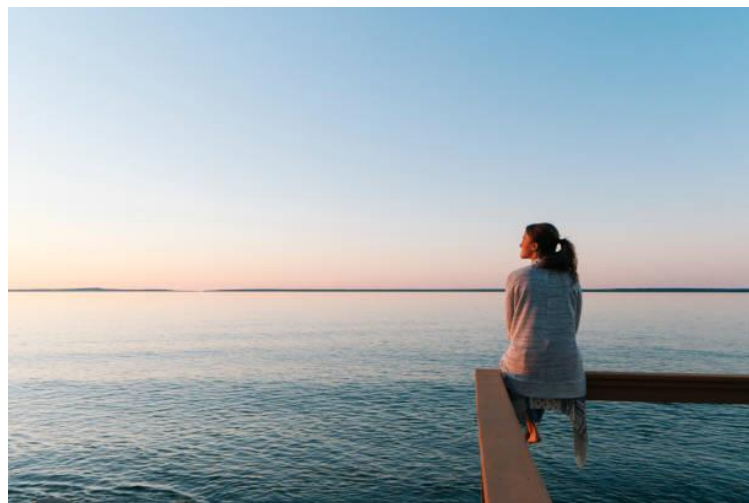
CAC is an educational nonprofit founded by Franciscan Richard Rohr in 1987 because he saw a deep need for the integration of both action and contemplation, regarding the two as inseparable. He describes contemplation as a way of listening with the heart while not relying entirely on the head, a prayerful letting go of our sense of control and choosing to cooperate with God and God's work in the world. Prayer without action, Father Richard says, can promote our tendency to self-preoccupation, and without contemplation, even well-intended actions can cause more harm than good.

The CAC Daily Meditations reflect on the wisdom and practices of the Christian contemplative tradition, to help deepen prayer practice and strengthen compassionate engagement in the world. A recent Daily Meditation shared this statement of the ecological wisdom of Indigenous

Peoples, as expressed by the Indigenous Caucus at the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches:

“We as Indigenous Peoples believe that the Creator is in Creation. God revealed Himself/Herself as Creator and Sustainer in the act of creation. The triune God, along with the land, co-parents all life. The mystery in John chapter 1 unfolds how the Creator abides in creation. The incarnation of God in Christ becomes totality in God’s creation... Through God all things were made, without God nothing was or is made. In God there is life, and in God is the light of all Creation. The presence of God made the world and therefore it is sacred. The work of creation in God is the unity of diversity, where all lives coexist in a harmonious balance because they are all from God. Each seed that sprouts begins creation anew, and not one seed can grow unless the Creator enables it. We believe that doing justice to God’s creation is the basis of liberation and the human search for selfhood.”

(This week’s notes are based on material kindly shared by John Stothers, Knock Methodist Church, Belfast, a dedicated member of Eco Congregation Ireland)



15th Oct

International Repair Day

International Repair Day is on Saturday 19th October. This is an initiative of Open Repair Alliance, a group of organisations committed to working towards a world where electrical and electronic products are more durable and easier to repair. Embodied carbon in new electronic products is an important source of greenhouse gas emissions and is estimated to have increased by 53% between 2014 and 2024. Increasing the life expectancy of devices can significantly mitigate total emissions.

The EU anti-waste directive introducing the right to repair products came in to force in 2024 but member states will have two years (until July 31, 2026) to transpose this into national legislation. Manufacturers will be required to offer to repair free of charge or at a reasonable price, unless repair is “impossible.”, provide spare parts at a reasonable price, not impede the use of parts manufactured by third parties, and not penalize consumers for seeking repair from third-party repairers.

Meanwhile Repair Cafés are becoming popular in Dublin, following the emergence of the idea in Holland in 2009. TOG Hackerspace are running a Repair Café on Saturday in Dublin 12, as part of their work of promoting community based, sustainable waste management. It is a positive sign that it is booked out! There are others coming up, and not just for electricals and electronics. The Rediscovery Centre in Ballymun will be repairing textiles, furniture and bicycles on 2nd November <https://www.rediscoverycentre.ie/workshops/repair-cafe/> and Mud Island community space on the North Strand advertise a Repair Café for the last Sunday of every month <https://mudisland.ie/>

International Repair Day may provide some pause for thought about the possibility of at least trying to delay the decision to throw things away.



Annie Leonard, is former executive director of Greenpeace USA

9th Oct

Harvest, Hunger and Hope



A frightening claim was made at a UN conference in 2014 that we have 'only 60 harvests left'. The basis was the degradation of soils due to over-grazing, over-fertilising and over-use. Data to support the claim was limited, but it served as a warning and a basis for a more hopeful analysis of how the world food system might release its potential to healthily sustain the global population.

The facts of world hunger are stark and groups like WDR are addressing them in the day-to-day context. Around 733 million people faced hunger in 2023, equivalent to one in eleven people globally and one in five in Africa. The drivers of this deteriorating situation are many: food price inflation, conflict, climate change, economic downturns.

Meanwhile, estimates of adult obesity show a steady increase over the last decade, from 12.1 percent (2012) to 15.8 percent (2022). This is also a social and political issue, driven by unaffordable healthy diets, unhealthy food environments and persistent inequality.

Authors such as Hannah Ritchie and Philip Lymbery* envision a hopeful future under titles such as 'How to reach a nature friendly future' and 'How not to eat the planet'.** Actions needed to feed a healthy diet to a global population greater than we have today are set out as a series of interventions needing only changes in human behaviour and political will.

One of challenges in our food system is that we are growing so much food to feed to the animals we eat. Only half the world's cereals go directly to human food, the figures for developing countries are different, but in the USA 48% of cereals grown are fed to livestock. Advocating a plant based diet is controversial for many Irish people but even switching from one type of meat for another could have significant impact. To produce 100 calories from chicken requires 7m² of land use as against 164m² for beef. The humble egg scores best of all our 'traditional' foods on many measures of environmental impact.

Action on food waste should be one of the less controversial interventions. All of the people suffering hunger globally could be fed from the 1.3 billion tons wasted annually. Human behaviour in developed countries is hard to change and even provision of bins for compostable waste is not always automatic. In developing countries, food can also be wasted because of poor storage and transportation to market. Plastic containers may be frowned upon in the global north, but they have been proven to be a solution to losses in the supply chain for many third world farmers.

Closer to home, we heard during our 'Sky's the Limit' session in February this year with Trevor from Dunlavin, of the work being done by young Irish farmers on combatting soil degradation through Conservation Agriculture. He spoke of changes in both mentality and methods, avoiding overcultivation which is killing natural biology, avoiding fungicides and sowing a 'catch crop' such as radishes instead of ploughing. He acknowledged the challenges too when he said 'It's hard to farm green when you are in the red'.

Food is one of the great gifts of creation which we celebrate at Harvest. We can do so in ways that are mindful of the broader context, yet follow Ecclesiastes 9:7-8: 'Go eat your food with gladness.....for God has already approved what you do'.

*Lymbery, Philip; Sixty Harvests Left: How to reach a nature friendly future; Bloombury, 2022

** Richie, Hannah; Not the End of the World: Chapter 5; Chatto and Windus, 2024

2nd Oct

Season of Creation will end on 4th October, the feast of St Francis of Assisi. His famous *Canticle of the Creatures* reveals how integrally interconnected he felt to all elements of God's creation and sought to maintain their integrity.

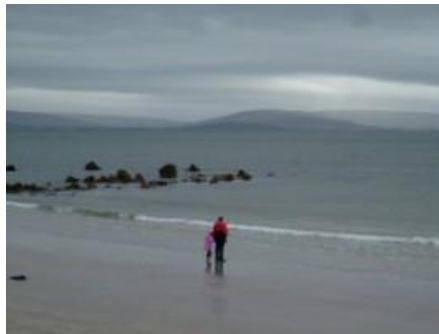
The Canticle of the Creatures by St. Francis of Assisi, 1225 AD www.franciscans.ie

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honour, and all blessing,
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no human is worthy to mention Your name.

Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour;
and bears a likeness to You, Most High One.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather,
through whom You give sustenance to Your creatures.



Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night,
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains and governs us,
and who produces varied fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.



Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no one living can escape.

Woe to those who die in mortal sin.

Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.

Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.

