

Along the track

Pineapple

One of the houses listed for inclusion in the heritage list in NSW elicited this response from a potential client: "You wouldn't buy it from the outside would you?" To which the architect replied: "Would you eat a pineapple from the outside?"

Durians, a very popular fruit in Singapore, are banned on public transport because they have a pungent odour, described as being similar to rotting onions or sweaty feet. Yet they are enormously popular there.

The Israelites took a bit of convincing to eat manna. The Book of Exodus described manna as having to be collected before it was melted by the sun, and as being "a fine, flake-like thing" like the frost on the ground, arriving with the dew during the night. It was like a coriander seed in size but white in colour and raw it tasted like wafers that had been made with honey. The Israelites were instructed to eat only the manna they had gathered for each day because stored manna "bred worms and stank." Today some scholars suggest that manna is the crystallized honeydew of certain scale insects.

So what?

Creation is an extraordinary gift. Its diversity is amazing. It can be wonder-filled and terrifying at the same time, peaceful and challenging, awe inspiring and something that invites us to contemplation and renewal. At different times and in different places it comes in many shapes and sizes, as the examples above indicate. Creation is a dynamic process and we are part of it. Farmers watch the creation cycle every year and so do home gardeners. It can be hardy, surviving droughts and flooding rains, insects and disease. If we neglect it or abuse it, things can be altered or lost forever. And we are all custodians of this extraordinary gift. What each of us chooses to do or not do about that can have quite an impact.

Pope Francis writes and speaks often of the gift of creation: "Creation is not a property, which we can rule over at will; or, even less, is the property of only a few: Creation is a gift, a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude". Sometimes we get overwhelmed and wonder, what can one person do? A lot.

The Genesis creation story is essentially a personal one – each of us shares in the life of the creative Spirit of God. The first image we get of God is as creator and we are made in the image of that God – so our relationship with God, with each other and

God's creation is part of that creative enterprise. Each of us is meant to tend and care for the garden (Gen. 2:15), the air, water, land, plants, and animals.

We can, if we wish, live in creation-friendly ways by using energy efficiently, conserving resources, considering the environmental impact of our consumer purchases. Being a custodian means that the way we use creation must be designed to conserve and renew it rather than to deplete or destroy it. Yet we live in a land of plenty where supermarkets reject thousands and thousands of tons of fruit and vegetables because they don't 'look right.'. They do that because customers (us) won't buy them. Some growers truck hundreds of tons of this produce every year to centres that help feed those who are in hardship, but it has become too expensive to transport it all. If enough of us change the habit of having to buy only what looks right, that can benefit so many others. It is important to think about what you waste and why.

What do we plant? Trees, flowers, vegetables, shrubs, bushes all have their purpose in the cycle of life. At the very least, they store some carbon but they also provide homes for all sorts of animals, insects and birds. When bushfires come and habitats are destroyed, sometimes we have to pick up the slack and give nature a hand, even if we live in the towns or the cities. What we plant can make a difference. Each of us can do something about climate change, even in a small way. Just making one change can make a difference.

So go outside regularly. Just enjoy creation, even if it's only for a few minutes a day. Connecting with the gift of creation and being reminded of God's goodness is a powerful way to motivate ourselves and others to care for our common home.

In my very early days, I edited a magazine called "Aorta" – in other words, Aorta (they) ought to do something about the roads or this or that. Instead of that, why not leave out the 'they'? Why not try to get your family, or your school, or your parish, or your community, or your workplace or your club to commit to one action to restore creation for one year?

Regards
Jim Quillinan

Email: jquillinan@dcsi.net.au