

God's Gifts – A Homily

By Revd Johannes Nobel

People from Yorkshire and people from Holland have something in common. We're tight. We don't like spending our money. We want the best deal. We love a bargain.

Well, let me tell you about what I think is the biggest bargain ever.

You see, we all feel the pinch at the moment. Inflation is at 6.8%. Everything is more expensive than it was a year ago.

But recently week, I had a real shock, when I received my energy bill. I knew it had gone up. That, I had expected. But it was all the extras which shocked me.

It was all itemised, mind you.

Our household of four had somehow managed to breath in over 4 million litres of air this month. So, naturally, there was the photosynthesis charge. Those trees need paying.

Next, it turns out the four of us used about half a million litres of water. We didn't drink all that, of course. This was the water that went into producing our food, our clothing, our gadgets, and who knows what else. All I can tell you is that it added up. More than 100.000 gallons.

Then there were the bee and insect levies on top of that. They're not optional, of course. We wouldn't be able to live without insect services.

And not to forget the Natural Health Service contribution. Thankfully we'd only watched three sunsets this month. But I had indulged in birdwatching. And we had been picking blackberries as a family. On a warm day last month, my little girl had spent hours just watching the clouds drift by. And my son, with the Scouts, had watched the stars. Hello, starlight premium charge.

So, you can imagine that I hardly dared look at the second page of the bill. And the third one.

But this is the amazing thing. This is what I wanted to tell you about. The true shock came on the last page. Because this is what it said: 'All the items listed above under the heading 'Creation' are provided free of charge. All costs incurred are

carried by The Creator. To find out more about the Creator, [click here](#).'

So, no premium fees for starlit skies, all-inclusive sunsets, no payment for insect services, no charge whatsoever for half a million litres of water, nothing to pay to the trees for the oxygen they provided, and free blackberries in every hedgerow! It was all paid for by the Creator.

I really stopped me in my tracks. Made me think. It seemed too good to be true. Who in this world would give all these beautiful things away for free? So, I clicked on that link, to find out more about this Creator, and I read, from the Book of Job, chapter 12, verse 7:

⁷ "Ask the animals, and they will teach you,
or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;

⁸ or speak to the earth, and it will teach you,
or let the fish in the sea inform you.

⁹ Which of all these does not know
that the hand of the Lord has done this?

¹⁰ In his hand is the life of every creature
and the breath of all mankind.

God our Creator holds us in his hands. The very air we breathe, is his. The water in our rivers, is his. The soil beneath our feet, is his.

'The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it.' (Ps 24.1)

But God the Creator is the most generous giver. He shares creation with us. All the earth's most wonderful sights, every delicious fruit of the harvest, fresh air, beautiful birdsong, clean water, wildflowers in the light of the evening sun. Everything for free.

'Bargain' isn't the right word, really. Because that would still imply some kind of paid-for transaction. It's beyond a bargain. It's a gift. A free gift. It is amazing grace. It is pure love. Thank you, good Lord.

And then I heard a voice. This is what the voice said:

'How do you think I feel, about your rubbish in my rivers, about your poison gasses in my air, about your uncontrolled greed and consumption of what I gave to you to for free? How do you think, I feel?'

Amen.

In a group setting

Discuss the reflection together.

- If we put a price on nature, would that help us to value it more?
- How would we calculate the price and the value of nature?
- Explore the ways in which we understand and show appreciation for God's generosity in Creation.
- Invite the congregation to name the gifts of God that they most want to give thanks for today.

Morning glory, starlit sky,
Soaring music, scholar's truth,
Flight of swallows, autumn leaves,
Memory's treasure, grace of youth:

Open are the gifts of God,
Gifts of love to mind and sense;
Hidden is love's agony,
Love's endeavour, love's expense

Love that gives, gives evermore,
Gives with zeal, with eager hands,
Spares not, keeps not, all outpours,
Ventures all, its all expends.

Drained is love in making full,
Bound in setting others free,
Poor in making many rich,
Weak in giving power to be.

Therefore he who shows us God
Helpless hangs upon the tree;
And the nails and crown of thorns
Tell of what God's love must be.

Here is God, no monarch he,
Throned in easy state to reign;
Here is God, whose arms of love,
Aching, spent, the world sustain.

W. H. Vanstone 1976, printed in "Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense: The response of Being to the Love of God," (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1977).