

ITALY

Italian diocese plants trees in reparation for World Youth Day pollution

CREATION

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Apparently, anything can happen in the Church nowadays. Unthinkable things, unheard-of oddities, even nonsense disguised as pastoral novelties. Now acts of reparation are being made for travelling by plane and thus contributing to the emission of gases into

the atmosphere. The injustice committed against the environment has to be repaired, with repentance for having done so, such as planting seedlings to amend the wrong inflicted and to compensate for the carbon dioxide produced, to sow hope for a greener world ... all in the presence of the local bishop.

This is what is happening in the diocese of Forlì-Bertinoro. On 3 March, a ceremony was held with the participation of Bishop Livio to plant the first of three thousand seedlings in the 'Laudato si' Parish Wood'. Planting will continue on Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 March. The initiative was organised by the Diocesan Institute for Clergy Support, Pastoral Vocations and Pastoral Youth under the title: 'Let us plant hope' and is an invitation to all young people in groups or individually to participate'. But, which young people? All of them, but in particular those who participated in the World Youth Day (WYD) in Lisbon in 2023. Indeed, the motivation for this whole initiative is to make a gesture of "ecological awareness and reparation" for the journey these young people made to Lisbon. By travelling they polluted and now the offence inflicted on the environment needs to be repaired. The eco-offence, being an eco-offence, requires eco-reparation.



many and widespread, but none of its critics anticipated such banalities could be the consequence of its application. Perhaps not even its author could have foreseen such embarrassing superficialities. Christian hope reduced to a gardening activity, the technical use of garden centre language (planting), an aeroplane journey conceived as a sin to be repaired, the environment personalised as the subject of the offence or injustice, the bishop understood as the manager of the garden. One wonders where such imaginative delivery comes from.

In recent days, there has been discussion about the European Union's new clampdown on 'ecocide'. Crimes to be prosecuted have been defined and states have been instructed to train police forces and judges. The eco-offence was invented, very similar to Orwell's psycho-offence. Yet, to speak of ecocide is to consider the environment a living being, a person who can be killed, and it is to present mankind, the real person, as responsible for that crime. To this twisting of words and therefore of reality is now added the diocese of Forlì-Bertinoro, which creates the eco-sin, eco-confession and eco-reparation. But at this point, instead of repairing the offence inflicted on the environment by going to Lisbon, wouldn't it be better next time not to send young people to next year's WYD?

The most problematic aspect in these superficially emotional pastoral initiatives

lacking any serious spiritual and theological foundation, is the use of the word reparation. A very significant word from a theological point of view and in the spiritual and moral life of the Christian. The 'new Adam' makes reparation for Adam's disobedience. Jesus made reparation to the Father for our mistakes and sins. Christ's sacrifice has a value of reparation, atonement and redemption.

In fact, the Christian moral life imposing reparation on those who are justly punished is praiseworthy; justice demands that we make reparation for the wrong inflicted on those who have been robbed by returning the wrong taken away. The Catechism says that "every fault committed against justice and truth imposes the duty of reparation". It is inexplicable how one can apply this Christian wisdom tradition on reparation to an alleged injustice committed against the environment, I say alleged because we know how much the environmental issue is debated and exploited by ideologies and interests.

The word reparation then takes us back to Fatima. The Angel calls for sacrifice and prayer in reparation for the sins by which God is offended. The outraged Heart of Mary asks through the Little Shepherds for reparation. The devotion of the First Saturdays is indicated as a means of reparation. For the Little Shepherds, reparation is an act of love to cheer up God made sad by our sins.

If we compare these meanings of reparation summarised here with the reparation that underlies the initiative of the Forlì-Bertinoro diocese, we experience a sense of desolation. The offence against the environment has taken the place of the offence against God, sin is seen as a profane thing, reparation does not imply 'conversion' to God but a new 'ecological awareness', our eco-sins can be repaired through a practice such as 'planting' seedlings. Sin and reparation are worldly things, and hope is reduced to a verdant environment.