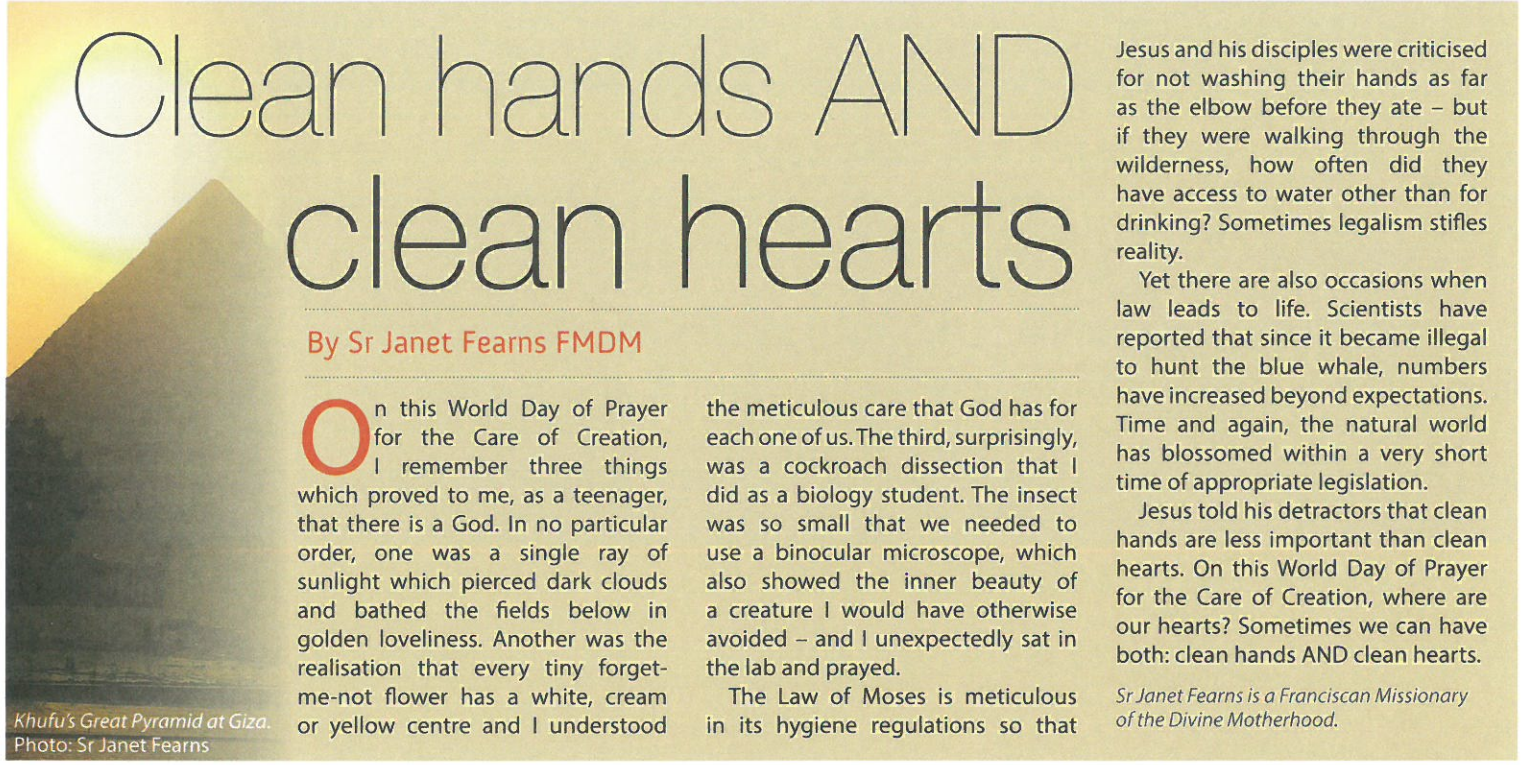


# SUNDAY PLUS

Care for creation



Khufu's Great Pyramid at Giza. Photo: Sr Janet Fearn

## Clean hands AND clean hearts

By Sr Janet Fearn FMDM

**O**n this World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, I remember three things which proved to me, as a teenager, that there is a God. In no particular order, one was a single ray of sunlight which pierced dark clouds and bathed the fields below in golden loveliness. Another was the realisation that every tiny forget-me-not flower has a white, cream or yellow centre and I understood

the meticulous care that God has for each one of us. The third, surprisingly, was a cockroach dissection that I did as a biology student. The insect was so small that we needed to use a binocular microscope, which also showed the inner beauty of a creature I would have otherwise avoided – and I unexpectedly sat in the lab and prayed.

The Law of Moses is meticulous in its hygiene regulations so that

Jesus and his disciples were criticised for not washing their hands as far as the elbow before they ate – but if they were walking through the wilderness, how often did they have access to water other than for drinking? Sometimes legalism stifles reality.

Yet there are also occasions when law leads to life. Scientists have reported that since it became illegal to hunt the blue whale, numbers have increased beyond expectations. Time and again, the natural world has blossomed within a very short time of appropriate legislation.

Jesus told his detractors that clean hands are less important than clean hearts. On this World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, where are our hearts? Sometimes we can have both: clean hands AND clean hearts.

*Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.*

## Hearts and hands

By Mary Bell

Recycling one's plastic and paper is admirable but not doing so does not constitute sin. Washing one's hands is obviously hygienic and during the Covid pandemic we were even instructed in how and for how long we should do it, but even this was not a moral obligation like "Do not steal or commit murder". There is a dividing line between what one might call moral rules and those which are "accidentals" or "externals".

In some religions certain foods are considered unclean and there are traditional practices concerned with washing, or wearing certain clothes, that are compulsory: things which, although they may be socially desirable, often loom larger in practice than matters of greater moral importance.

Truly unclean things, as Jesus says, are the evils which come from the heart. Washing hands means nothing in comparison with lying, cheating, murdering, committing all kinds of sins. These alone merit the loss of eternal life.

*Following many years in the classroom, retired teacher and head of RE, Mary Bell now has time to enjoy the beauties of the natural world around her.*

Each one of us should be a guardian of the environment, of the purity of the environment, seeking to combine ancestral knowledge of millennia-long cultures with new technical knowledge, so that our lifestyle may always be sustainable.  
**Pope Francis**

Feast of the week  
Monday 2 September

## Bl. John Francis Burté and companions

Over the centuries, countless people have died as martyrs for their religious beliefs. Some of them are known only to their killers – and, most importantly, to God.

During the French Revolution, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy effectively subordinated the Church to the State by reducing the number of bishops, changing the clergy into paid government employees and ordering them to swear an oath of primary loyalty to the nation.

Today's feast commemorates the martyrdom of three Franciscans (Bl. John Francis Burté, Severin Girault and Appolinaris of Posat) who, with 182 others – including several bishops, and many nuns and priests – were massacred at the Carmelite house in Paris on 2 September 1792. They all refused to swear "to support with all [their] power the Constitution decreed by the National [Constituent] Assembly".

In recent years Christians and non-Christians alike have accepted a brutal death rather than deny God as they believe God to be. May their example bring peace to our troubled world.

Help us, Lord, to treasure our fragile and beautiful world.  Amen.

**Today:**  
Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8  
James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27  
Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

**Monday:**  
1 Corinthians 2:1-5  
Luke 4:16-30

**Tuesday:**  
1 Corinthians 2:10-16  
Luke 4:31-37

**Wednesday:**  
1 Corinthians 3:1-9  
Luke 4:38-44

**Thursday:**  
1 Corinthians 3:18-23  
Luke 5:1-11

**Friday:**  
1 Corinthians 4:1-5  
Luke 5:33-39

**Saturday:**  
1 Corinthians 4:6-15  
Luke 6:1-5

**Next Sunday:**  
Isaiah 35:4-7  
James 2:1-5  
Mark 7:31-37

