

THE KEY TO SURVIVAL IS **MAD**

M = MUTUALITY

A = AWARENESS

D = DIVERSITY

Today's Gospel from Matthew proclaims the principle on which all great religions - and many humanists - agree:

"Always treat others as you would like them to treat you" - what is known as the 'Golden Rule'.

MUTUALITY is a foundation of God's Kingdom, and thus the key to the survival of human society: we look out for each other and we support each other. This is only possible, however, if we are truly AWARE of our needs and the needs of others, if we are aware of the difference between NEEDS and WANTS (or desires). We must also accept the DIVERSITY of human needs, and accept that the needs of our sister or brother might well be different from ours; this requires the gift of EMPATHY, the ability to 'walk in someone else's shoes'.

We are called to be OPEN to the needs of others: to turn our backs on them is to turn our backs on God.

But these MAD principles do not only apply to our interactions with our fellow-humans. They must inform our approach to the whole of Creation.

In an important elaboration of Jesus' teaching, Pope Francis enjoins us to heed 'the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth'.

The relationship of MUTUALITY applies to Creation generally: we expect the Earth to provide us with food, drink and shelter. How do we respond to her needs? Do we cherish her and nurture her? What about AWARENESS? We think we have the right to plunder the Earth as we see fit to fulfil our perceived needs; how aware are we of the needs of the Earth, if she is to blossom and flourish? If for no other reason than enlightened self-interest, we should look after the environment on which we ultimately depend

And what about DIVERSITY? How important is it for us to treasure not only the diversity of our human family - 7 billion people, each different but all created in the image of God - but also the richness and diversity of the 'natural world'. To what extent do we honour and respect that diversity?

Thus the principle embodied in the Golden Rule must inform our relationship and our interaction with the whole of Creation, of which humanity is but a constituent part.

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