Maybe the sun really does shine on the righteous; because there was some unseasonably warm sunshine, yesterday (Friday), as children across the country took to the streets determined to draw our attention to the urgent need to protect the earth’s climate and environment.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of children taking strike action during a school day; they at least chose to act on an issue of extreme urgency and importance. Let’s hope we all take notice.

For, many who grew up in the aftermath of the Second World War, having first tightened their belts during rationing and economic downturns; subsequently enjoyed periods of plenty.

Rapid technological developments, expanding industrial capacity, copious supplies of fossil fuels, huge shopping developments and relaxed opening times produced unsustainable levels of consumerism.

At the same time the swinging sixties heralded a sense that we can live free from constraints in our interpersonal relationships.

We have lived through happy times for the most part unaware of the toll we were taking on the health of the planet and the welfare of other human beings. And in throwing off the shackles of unwholesome moralistic attitudes we have also perhaps lost sight of some of our wider ethical responsibilities.

Yesterday’s demonstrations might give us pause for thought. Those younger than ourselves are calling us to account; pointing out that there are consequences to our chosen lifestyles.

There is an uncanny echo here of Jesus’ admonitions in today’s gospel: Alas, he says for those who are rich; such consolations will be short lived. Alas for those who live in search of a high; their destiny is a fall; Alas for those who rest on their laurels, they risk being accused of wrecking the life chances of succeeding generations.

Faced with such uncomfortable prospects those who are young are urging us who might have done better to mend our ways and live more thoughtfully.

This is a real moral challenge; a call to review our priorities and to chart a new course.

And if we are looking for a spiritual model to guide us; we could helpfully turn to a formula that lies at the heart of Saint Ignatius Loyola’s teaching. Which goes something like this:

We have all been lovingly created by God, we are not random, we have a high calling and purpose. We are unique among the countless beautiful creatures and inanimate objects on earth because we can respond by our own will to the gift of life. We can see all that is as given by God, we can find ways by which to express our gratitude; we can ally ourselves with the creator by helping to heal the planet.

We are privileged to have learnt so many of the principles that govern the functioning of creation, we have hearts that can take delight in its beauty and to feel responsible and considerate to creatures more vulnerable than ourselves. Our lives are enhanced by the things that we use for food, shelter, healthcare and leisure; but we run the risk of taking them for granted or worse still treating them as if we really do own them. We can see things as ends in themselves rather than as gifts from God.

Then by valuing good things like comfort, health and a long life above all others, we deprive ourselves of the most reliable consolation of all which is trust in the giver of all these gifts.

It is trust in the eternal goodness of God which offers true freedom, it is the only thing we can cling to when all else falls short. And it releases us to continue living the adventure of life unhindered steps and a profound, not fleeting joy that undergirds our lives even in times of sadness.