



Deepening Our Relationship with the Earth

An address for the Cosmic Mass for the Second Sunday in Lent
8th March 2009 ● Rev Kate

*Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the heavens,
 praise him in the heights!
Praise him, all his angels,
 praise him, all his host!
Praise him, sun and moon,
 praise him, all you shining stars!
Praise him, you highest heavens,
 and you waters above the heavens!
Let them praise the name of the Lord!
For he commanded and they were created.
And he established them for ever and ever;
 he fixed their bounds which cannot be passed.
Praise the Lord from the earth,
 you sea monsters and all deeps,
 fire and hail, snow and frost,
 stormy wind fulfilling his command!
Mountains and all hills,
 fruit trees and all cedars!
Beasts and all cattle,
 creeping things and flying birds!
Kings of the earth and all peoples,
 princes and all rulers of the earth!
Young men and maidens together,
 old men and children!
Let them praise the name of the Lord,
 for his name alone is exalted;
 his glory is above earth and heaven.
He has raised up a horn for his people,
 praise for all his saints,
 for the people of Israel who are near to him.
Praise the Lord!
Psalm 148*

Welcome to this second Sunday in Lent. Both the psalm and the song today are prayers of praise and reflection. The psalm is a beautiful and selfless kind of prayer where the focus is on our Father God and creator, and in the song the focus is on the Risen Christ. We are not involved in our own problems, or our wants and needs, so our gaze can be turned on higher things.

The psalm gathers us up into the heavens with the spiritual beings and then connects us with the earth. We are of the heavens and of the earth. And today I want to talk about the earth, because I have become more aware of the extent and the intimacy of my relationship with the universe and particularly the earth.

It is a time when the earth is changing because of many conditions that are influencing it and causing familiar and comfortable patterns to be called into doubt. There is a lot of fear and anxiety being projected out there amongst those for whom the material world is the only reality. We must not become infected, for our thoughts and feeling manifest and must be those of a Christed understanding of what is happening.

Let's look then at that reality of our intimacy with the earth. All the elements of the earth are reflected in me, are a part of you and me. We are very familiar with the earth its beauty and its glory, but also its barrenness. I am thinking now about a deeper deep-down familiarity and heightened understanding of how precious the earth is.

We have been back many times in so many different places, and experienced it through so many different lives. As our consciousness expands we will remember, but in reality the knowledge is in the cells of your body, this affinity with the earth.

We also have existed before this earth in other incarnations of the earth. In its very first incarnation, on ancient Saturn, we received the first seed of our physical body through the mineral elements.

In the second incarnation of this earth on Old Sun we received the seed of our etheric body from the etheric of the earth. We continued to change along with the earth, and on the third incarnation, Old Moon, we received our astral body along with the earth. These are veiled in the mists of antiquity. Then our present earth incarnated, and this earthly part of us developed until we have reached a peak of earthly development. But the gift in this incarnation is the Spirit, which gradually pervaded the earth and created the greatest change in us and in the earth.

We changed the earth, for our spirit is the power of thought. I think of us in the Persian era taking up the impulse of agriculture, as an example. Like all impulses from the spiritual worlds, it is what human beings did with it that matters. Or rather, to place us in the context, what we did and are doing with it. And we have not done so well by this precious place given to us to use and reverence.

I want to read you a poem by the priest-poet Gerard Manly Hopkins, which many of you will know.

God's Grandeur

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all are seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.*

*And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs –
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.*

He tells us that "there lives the dearest freshness deep down things" which is about renewal, despite the fact that the earth "wears man's smudge" and that "the soil is bare". But then he

gives us the image of Holy Spirit hovering over creation as he did in the beginning: this creation which is not finished yet.

We do hear the grief of what was being done to the earth in the 19th century, and we feel this too about our time. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, has a wonderful hopeful message which, however, places responsibility with us as sons of God for creation and for the task for seeing it through. This was, of course, God's command to us from the beginning:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Romans 8:19-23

Our longing for the earth to be made whole is also our longing for ourselves to be fully united with Christ. It is our responsibility to live the Christed life that goes hand in hand with caring for the creation, because we are in this close intimate relationship. It cannot be free, complete and transformed until we understand how this is being done, and until we experience "the redemption of our bodies".

Just as we can look back at our times in other worlds, it's good to look into the future and know that we will live on future incarnations of the earth. As we come to the end of this one, we will live on New Jupiter, and then New Venus, and then Vulcan. The changes that are happening in an outward form are happening as transformation in an inward way, only perceptible to our inner eye and our eye of faith.

That "dearest, freshness deep down things", which is about regeneration, is also the miracle of Christ's spirit within the earth. Mario, our own mystic, has a profound article called "My Body, my Blood", and I would like to quote from it.

Through the events of Golgotha, and the body which was broken on the Cross and the blood which flowed, the world received within its bosom the great I AM of Christ. At the moment of death the Christ impulse flowed, through means of his blood, into the earth.

This spirit, which I call Christ, was willing to let his body be broken, so that he, through its burial in the earth, could become one with the earth. He was willing to let his blood be shed in order that its power could permeate the entire earth.

It means that every thing that we eat and drink brings us into contact with the spiritualised body of Christ. We also celebrate the ritual of bread and wine, with its great power, in the Mass and in Communion. It is hard to think of anything more intimate than that. I also think about digging and planting and growing, and about walking on the earth, and gazing. As we do this with consciousness, the image of this Christed earth becomes even more precious, for our I AM reflects more brightly the I AM of Christ.

I think we have to draw on our own mystic within to understand and experience the wonder of this.

To finish with, I want to read a passage from another mystic. Sometimes poets and mystics can express some things so they are more accessible to our heart and intuition.

This is from the priest-mystic Teilhard de Chardin, whose prayer beginning “Lock us up into the deepest depth of your heart” is said in the mystical moment of the Mass. He says that our relationship to the world is not a fluffy superficial glimmer that passes, or a violent blinding flash, but “a calm and powerful radiance engendered by the synthesis of all the elements of the world in Christ”.

Throughout my life, by means of my life (he was a palaeontologist), the world has little by little caught fire in my sight until, a flame all around me, it has become almost luminous from within.

Such has been my experience in contact with the earth, the diaphany of the Divine at the heart of the universe on fire. Christ - His heart - a fire capable of penetrating everywhere and gradually spreading everywhere. He penetrates it as light does a crystal...

Focus the soul's inner eye so as to perceive this magnificence of the earth. Greater still Lord let your universe be greater still, so that I may hold you and be held by you, by a contact at once made ever more intense and ever wider in its extent.

Works from Rev Mario Schoenmaker
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The Centre in Melbourne
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email: melbournecentre@ica.org.au
web: <http://www.ica.org.au/melbourne>