

Good Friday is Earth Day

This reflection by Dr. Christopher Lind chris@christopherlind.ca is ideally suited for use this year on Good Friday. It could be used as part of a homily, or in a Holy Week discussion group. It may be reproduced without charge with attribution for insertion in bulletins or may be posted on parish websites. Responses are welcome. Other resources are available at the Greening Anglican Spaces webpages at <http://www.anglican.ca/relationships/action/greening/>.

April 22, 2011 is Good Friday. It is also Earth Day, a good day to remind ourselves that the Earth is a community of life dependent on one another for its existence. All organisms which breathe, inhale and exhale the same air. That includes us. We even trade oxygen and carbon dioxide with our neighbouring plants and trees. Yet, for many centuries most people, including most Christians, have thought of humanity as being higher, greater, more valued than or even separate from the rest of Creation. This hierarchical attitude has also infected relationships among humans. In this way we have broken our Covenant with God. We have broken the Great Commandment because we have not loved God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength. Nor have we loved our neighbour as ourselves.

One of the results has been our willingness to sacrifice the community of all living things, our Earth community, in order that humans might continue to consume fossil fuels without restraint. The prophet Isaiah imagined a time such as this. Some 2700 years ago Isaiah wrote:

“The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.... The earth is utterly broken, the earth is torn asunder, the earth is violently shaken.” (Is 24:5,19)

On Good Friday, Christians remember another sacrifice. On this day we recognize our complicity in sacrificing the very Image of the Divine among us. On that day so many years ago, God died. And yet, God lives. In the journey from Friday's Cross to Sunday's Empty Tomb we recognize our guilt in perpetuating injustice and confess it. In the depths of our despair, in our fear and our sorrow, we beg for mercy and yearn for another chance to do right by our neighbours. When the light of a new day reveals an empty tomb we recognize that death can be overcome. We are not alone and God will not abandon us.

And so it is with the Earth. In our indifference, in our callous disregard for the needs of all living beings, we have put the Earth upon the Cross. Today is the day for us to recognize our guilt in perpetuating injustice against our partners in Creation and confess it. In the journey from Good Friday to Easter Sunday we have an opportunity to repent and beg for mercy. True repentance requires a change of heart, a change of mind and new actions that demonstrate our new conviction. St. Paul reminds us that “that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until *now*; and not only the creation, but we

ourselves” (Rom. 8: 22-23). *Now* is the time for us to end our persecution of the Earth. *Now* is the time for us to share the resources needed for life, with all of Life. *Now* is the time for us to cooperate with the Divine in making an Earth future possible.

“By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,
O God of our salvation;
You are the hope of all the ends of the Earth
And of the farthest seas.”
Psalm 65: 5