

Meditation 16th November 2021

EARTHRISE

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...

God saw all that He had made, and it was very good...

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array...

Genesis 1, verses 1-31 and 2,verse1



Psalm 24:1-2

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

On 21st December 1968, Apollo 8 was launched into space carrying 3 astronauts, Frank Borman, Jim Lovell and Bill Anders, it left the Earth's atmosphere and travelled 250,000 miles into orbit around the moon. As the astronauts emerged from the dark side of the moon, Borman saw something:

"I happened to glance out of one of the still-clear windows just at the moment the Earth appeared over the lunar horizon. It was the most beautiful heart-catching sight of my life, one that sent a torrent of nostalgia, of sheer homesickness, surging through me. It was the only thing in space that had any color to it. Everything was either black or white, but not the Earth." Frank Borman, Apollo 8, December 1968, Earthrise photo by Bill Anders.

Twenty years later Anders recalled "We'd spent all our time on Earth training about how to study the moon, how to go to the moon... And yet when I looked up and saw the Earth coming up on this very stark, beat up lunar horizon, an Earth that was the only color that we could see, a very fragile looking Earth, a very delicate looking Earth, I was immediately almost overcome by the thought that we came all this way to see the moon, and yet the most significant thing we're seeing is our own home planet, the Earth."

James Fox, "But when we finally escaped our world and voyaged beyond its horizons, we discovered that all along blue was the colour of home."

(from *The World According to Colour: A Cultural History* by James Fox)

As an 18 year old, in my last year of school, I was amazed and captivated, like many, by the intense beauty, fragility and uniqueness of the Earth conveyed by this photo. That image has stayed with me and has become especially poignant over the last couple of weeks during the COP26 conference in Glasgow. Of course, even in 1968, it was known we were poisoning and damaging our world, that wonderful creation that God has given to Mankind.

In 1962, Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* was published, focussing on the negative effects of chemical pesticides on a large part of US agriculture. Her work helped to initiate a shift in global environmental consciousness.

In *The Rediscovery of Nature, (Meet Christ and Live (1972))*, Michel Quoist makes reference to the first World Conference on the Environment in Stockholm held in June 1972, he poses the question "Why this sudden interest in ecology? How does the environment affect man? How does it involve God? He says "We reflected, and we prayed."

Quoist reflects, then prays "Man does not spring from nothingness. He is the fruit of the Father's eternal love...Man has not only made selfish use of the earth for the happiness and pleasure of a few, and condemned others to sickness and early death; he has also exploited the earth without respecting it.....a commitment to nature, when viewed within the greater context of man's responsibilities to himself, to society and to the world, becomes a necessary part of the progress of man and the universe towards the final harmony of Eternal Love."

Lord, the earth has no arms, it has no voice.
Let me be its defender.
Let me fight on its behalf.
For it was you who gave me the earth, Lord;
You gave it to me and to all men.
In protecting it and developing it as you wish,
Once more I will save it, and in saving it, save all my brothers.

We can counter our fears about climate change and perhaps disappointments about the outcomes from COP26, by going back to our Lord with our thanks and praise for the Earth which He has given us and the possibilities, through Him, of healing and renewal for that Earth and all its peoples. Let us pray for all children and young people and for those with the courage, energy and commitment to speak out and continue to press for action, people like Greta Thunberg. May we focus on the possibilities, and the part we might play in such a rebuilding of our world, which can be facilitated by meditation, contemplation and PRAYER to our great God!

From *In praise of the Earth in Blessings* by John Donohue

Let us bless the Earth...
Let us thank the Earth
That offers ground for home
And holds our feet firm
To walk in space open
To infinite galaxies...
Let us ask forgiveness of the earth
For all our sins against her:
For our violence and poisonings
Of her beauty...
That we may awaken,
To live to the full
The dream of the earth
Who chose us to emerge
And incarnate its hidden night
In mind, spirit and light.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnrw5F0Axw0>
Contemplation and Benediction Karl Jenkins/Carol Barratt