

April 24, 2016 Reflection on a Celtic Benediction

Deep peace of the running wave to you,
Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,
Deep peace of the shining stars to you,
Deep peace of the Son of peace to you.

The Celts spoke of the ‘little book’ that was the bible and the “great book” that was creation - and they read God in both. This Gaelic blessing comes from a time when people could believe with all their hearts in the deep peace of the creation. Humankind might rage and contend across borders and continents, empires might rise and fall, men and women might flower and die, to be blown away like grass in the wind, but the running wave, the flowing air, the quiet earth, the shining stars, these things would endure unchanging, promising deep peace in their stability, their beauty and their purity. Even eight centuries back these sentiments were versified in St Patrick’s Breastplate:

I bind unto myself today the virtues of the starlit heaven,
the glorious sun’s life-giving ray,
the whiteness of the moon at even,
the flashing of the lightning free,
the whirling wind’s tempestuous shocks,
the stable earth,
the deep salt sea around the old eternal rocks.

Today, we know that the earth, which seemed to our ancestors to be unchanging, unassailable and enduring, is actually in endless transition, that change is its only constant. Of course, the changes take place on a timescale almost unimaginable to us, over millennia upon millennia, and mostly they

are invisible to us, except where scientists have been able to interpret their observations. But we also know now that the pace of change - geological, climatic, ecological - has been vastly accelerated by human activity and the evidence of that is all around us, visible and indeed unavoidable.

The bible reminds us of our present condition, ***“I do not do the good I want to do; instead, I do the evil that I do not want to do”***, wrote the Apostle Paul in another context. Humankind has not deliberately sought to degrade and destroy its habitat; mostly it has sought to improve it, for the human species at any rate. But the determination to bend the earth to the will of humankind, the insistence to see ourselves as creator not created and the failure to recognize ourselves as a species among species, inextricably interdependent, is a judgement now being read back to us. So, it is time to change our perspective, to relent and repent of our climate changing activities. If not us, then who? If not now, then when?

Application for Today

Both the “little book” that is the bible and the “great book” that is creation reveal that innocence has left the building; the future is now on us.

Excerpts from [A Heart for Creation](#): Worship resources and reflections on the environment ChrisPolhill

Earth Awareness-Earth Prayer

Earth awareness begins with our intuition of the oneness of all life.

We recognize that our identity is entwined with lives beyond our own.

This sense of expanded identity goes beyond human relationships.

We depend upon trees, trees depend upon grasses, grasses depend upon animals, prairies depend upon oceans, the dolphin depends upon the farthest star.

Physically and spiritually, we all are woven into the living processes of the Earth. As science now tells us, we take part in a planet-sized living system.

Our breathing, our acting, our thinking arise in interaction with our shared world. Our own hearts constantly beat out the cosmic rhythm within us. We cannot escape our involvement any more than we can escape breathing the air that has traveled from plants thousands of miles away. Now here is where our faith comes in: When we ground our spiritual awareness in this ecological context, then the strength and unity of the living Earth, the wonder of intricate life sustaining relationships, in short the **Mystery** in the midst of life, flows through us. Our Earth awareness becomes an **Earth Prayer**, becomes a means of realigning ourselves. It helps us to empty the ego attachment and to open our hearts to be filled with empathy and creativity.

The *ecological self*, like any notion of selfhood, is simply a metaphor, but it is a dynamic one. It involves our choice. We can choose at different moments to identify with different aspects of our interrelated existence – be they hunted whales, or homeless humans, or the planet itself. The *ecological*

self, the *Earth pray-er* who offers **Earth Prayers** reminds us of this deep kinship – our bondedness with all of creation. The early Christian Celts knew this bondedness, the intricate weave of creator and creation. The Celts had a prayer for almost every activity: A rising to greet the day prayer and a turning in for the night prayer and everything in between. They had sunrise and sunset prayers, and prayers that called upon the stars, moon and sun, wave, water, earth, ears, eyes, and much more. All their prayers connected the *pray-er* to creation and the Creator seeking to heal any divisions, any tares in the sacred fabric of life.

As *Earth Pray-ers* we seek to heal the great division that has grown up between us and the rest of nature. We pay attention to the connections. We attend to the life sustaining relationships alive among all forms of life. As *Earth Pray-ers* we join with the whole *ecosphere* and care for it.

Application for Today

We begin by being mindful and grateful.

Every time you rise in the morning give thanks for the day that is beginning and every time you go to bed at night give thanks for the day that is ending. Every time you experience something beautiful or helpful, something difficult or challenging give thanks to God and creation.

Adapted from, *Earth Prayers from around the world*. Edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon

Earth Prayer Meditation

Follow your breathing inward: settle into that prayerful place.

Be mindful of the gift of air we share in our breathing.

God in all things: All things in God.

Be mindful of the earth beneath us, supporting and nourishing all life.

God in all things: All things in God.

Be mindful of the water within each cell of your body and all living cells:
The water in lakes, ponds, rivers, and oceans.

God in all things: All things in God.

Be mindful of the interconnectedness, the inter-dependence of all life:

God in all things: All things in God.

Be mindful of the necessity to include everything, not just what or whom we want.

God in all things: All things in God

Give thanks for all the relationships, human and otherwise,
that augment your life and the lives of others.

God in all relationships: All relationships in God.

Give thanks for all the people who enriched your existence;
known and unknown, liked and disliked.

God in all relationships: All relationships in God.

Give thanks for all the opportunities you have to enrich the lives of others.

God in all relationships: All relationships in God.

Give thanks to the Mystery in the midst of life, weaving the circle of life,
and allow yourself to become one with this Mystery.

God in all relationships: All relationships in God.

Now let us pray as Jesus taught us saying...