**JAEI ENVIRONMENTAL CORNER**

***Celebrating a Season of Creation***

**Creation and Redemption**

**“*On Earth as it is in heaven”***

***(***Taken from ***Season of Creation: Book 3)***

**COLLECT**

**Lord of all the universe**

**through your incarnation in Christ you identified with the created order**

**and proclaimed your love for the world:**

**assist us through your Son to respect and cherish the earth and all its creatures**

**through Jesus Christ who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,**

**one God now and forever. Amen**

**As it is in Heaven**

****The Gospels focus on Jesus of Nazareth, the historical Jesus. Paul, whose writings make up a third of the New Testament focuses more on Christ. He teaches us that Christ existed from all eternity, he was present at Creation. Col 1:*16 “For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”*

All things were created through him and for him. In the book of Acts we read that God raised up Jesus (of Nazareth) and anointed him as Christ (of the cosmos). This is the reality of the resurrection, Jesus the man died and was raised up as Christ, the anointed over all creation. As we discover more about this cosmos, its vastness and incredibly ancient history, we are re-reading these texts with new eyes and with hearts filled with awe. The word Christ means ‘the anointed one’ and that anointment by God includes us and the whole of creation.

The wonder of our faith is not just that we believe in God, it is that the material and spiritual coexist, the miracle of the Incarnation is that all things were created through Christ and for Christ. If we restore the idea that the Incarnation means that God loves the whole of creation, then we restore the sacred dimension to nature. Plants and animals and all of nature are windows into the endless creativity, fruitfulness and joy of God. We believe in the sweep of history, humanity and all of creation that Christ includes.

*Adapted from interview with Richard Rohr*

**God so loved the Earth**

**John 3:16:** This is probably the best know verse of all, *‘’for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son”*, perhaps the first verse we memorized in Sunday School! Most of us grew up believing that this verse means that God loved the peoples of the world, men and women of all lands. But if we go back to the original Greek we realize that the verse says ‘God so loved the **cosmos**’. This gives a bigger picture, God loves the entire universe that he created, from the tiniest molecule to the hugest galaxy. And the challenge for us is simple, in the words of Archbishop Emeritus Tutu, we need to ‘love the world as much as God does’. Archbishop Tutu also says *“It is a kind of theological folly to suppose that God created the entire world just for human beings.”* So if we read the verse with this understanding, the meaning becomes more wonderful: “God so loved the cosmos, that he sent his only begotten son, (Christ – through whom and for whom all things were created), so that all who believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life”

*Creation is waiting in eager expectation….. to be part of this salvation* (Rom 8:20-21)

**On Earth as in Heaven**

So if Jesus, the Christ, anointed over all things, was sent to save the whole of creation, what does that mean for us as human beings here and now?

**Isaiah 65: 17-25**

This passage in Isaiah describes this promised new life, when the Lord will create new heavens and a new Earth.

*17 “I will create new heavens and a new earth. The things that have happened before will not be remembered. They will not even enter your minds.*

We have tended to believe that salvation means that we are removed from this world of pain and suffering to a better world in heaven. In the words of Brian Maclaren, salvation becomes an “an evacuation plan to the next world”.

But God promises us a new heaven and a new Earth here on this planet.

What does Isaiah teach us? In this passage the exiles have returned to their land after years of captivity in Babylon. They had high hopes of a new society but the land is harsh, the rulers are cruel, the religious leaders are self-serving. Sadly, they discover that it is more painful to be oppressed by your own people than by foreigners. Great feasts are set for pagan idols while the poor go hungry. There is no true worship of the God of their ancestors. The land has been cursed and it is now a place of death.

God promises restoration and renewal for this ‘land of trouble.’ What will this restoration look like? God, God’s people, and God’s land will be woven together in just relations that alter the social, economic and ecological picture. But this will not be simply a mending of what has been broken and damaged. The vision of the prophet *(Isaiah 65.17- 25)* is a beautiful portrayal of complete re-creation, of a total make-over from the inside out. God looked upon creation in the beginning and said “it is good”, and now he calls out:

*“Be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy And her people to be a gladness” (18-19).*

The Creator and sustainer of all life says “I want to rejoice again over all creation as I did in the beginning. Come and co-create with me, I will show you how.” The prophet then goes on to present a vision of this New Earth, listing the challenges of this Earth.

At his inauguration President Nelson Mandela said this “Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another”.

And this is the pattern used in the description of this New Creation:

*“No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days….” v.20*

Never again will tiny babies die from preventable diseases and polluted water.

*“No more shall there be in it an old man who does not fill out his days” v.20*

Never again shall sickness and lack of community support take the elderly before their time.

*“They will build houses and dwell in them, and plant vineyards and eat of their fruit” v.2*

Never again will families be evicted from their land, and live in desolate squatter communities, or wander homeless on the streets. Sustainable farming will be part of the way of life, degraded eco-systems will be renewed.

*“No more shall they build and another inhabit or plant and others eat” v.21*

Never again shall people work for abusive wages while others live in luxury. Never again will land be managed by agro-industry that pushes people off the land and turns soil and seeds into a commodity.

*“No more they shall bear children for calamity” v.23*

Never again will people raise children with no hope for the future. There will be an end to infant malnutrition, foetal alcohol syndrome, to abuse of children and human trafficking.

Into this holistic vision of salvation, the prophet brings the overreaching vision of transformation of the entire web of life:

*“The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox. … they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain. v25*

Never again will one species destroy and eliminate another, the life-sustaining biodiversity of the entire ecosystem will be transformed. And humankind, the worst destroyer of all, with live in peace with all creation.

This is the vision of God’s salvation, a new heaven and a new earth, for the here and now, not the life hereafter. A heaven on earth to be experienced by all people, creatures and the whole web of life together.

And so we return to the words of Colossians

*“By Jesus Christ all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities --all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.* ***And he is the head of the body, the church”.***

So if the head of the Church is anointed to care for the whole web of Creation, then what are we as Christ’s body doing to make this vision of a new heaven and earth a reality?

*(Adapted from talk given by Ruth Padilla at Micah Network (Creation and Stewardship, Kenya 2009)*

***Let us pray ….***

**WE HAVE FAITH**

*(With a period of silence between each section)*

**We have faith**

in one God, one Source of all life, one Ground of the whole earth, with all her creatures.

**And thus we have faith**

in the goodness of earth’s life,

in the innate worth of all her dependents,

in human partnership in the life of nature.

**And we have faith**

that in Christ we have been shown the special role of the human

race to bear God’s likeness in working and caring for the earth,

in seeking to understand her mysteries and powers,

in working with these powers

for the wellbeing of all children of the earth.

**And we have faith**

that God’s Spirit will lead us to sensitive closeness with earth’s

life, to that meek, unselfish and compassionate life-style

by which the earth is inherited in peace,

by which her life is transformed for all creatures

to share justly in her bounty. So be it. Amen.

*(From India. Source: Sinfonia Oecumenica, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Gütersloh 1998. Reproduced by ECEN for Creation Time 2003)*





Jesus Christ, teach us to empathise with Earth.

Make our spirits sensitive to the cries of creation,

cries for justice from the air, the clouds and the sky,

cries of our fellow creatures deserted and dying.

Jesus Christ, make our faith sensitive to the groans of the

Spirit in creation, groans of longing for a new creation.

Jesus Christ, make our hearts sensitive to the songs of our kin, songs of celebration echoing around us.

Christ, teach us to care. Amen

*(*[*www.webofcreation.org/SeasonofCreation/animal.html*](http://www.webofcreation.org/SeasonofCreation/animal.html)*)*

Creator God, how great you are!

You clothe yourself in light.

You stretch out the skies like a tent.

Winds are your messengers, flames are your servants

You water the earth until it gives us food.

How abundant are your works, O God,

In wisdom you have made them all.

The creatures teeming the earth,

The sea, vast and wide –

Innumerable things, small and great, live within it –

All these look to you for their food in due season.

When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,

And you renew the face of the earth.

Psalm 104

Leader: O God, who called all life into being

**All: The earth, sea and sky are yours**

Your presence is all around us

**All: Every atom is full of your energy**

Your spirit enlivens all who walk the earth

**All: With her we yearn for justice to be done**

For creation to be freed from bondage

**All: For the hungry to be fed**

For captives to be released

**All: For your Kingdom of peace to come on earth.**

*(South West Churches Carbon Fast)*