

Reflection Before the Prayer Service

The Beauty of God's Creation...



Today is Ash Wednesday the beginning of the season of Lent.
Our reflective prayer today will be different than how we usually view ashes.

As we place the ashes on our foreheads today,
we dare to change the usual words and say:

“Remember that you are *earth* and to the *earth* you shall return.”

The Hebrew word for earth “*adamah*” has the same meaning in Genesis 2:

“The Lord God formed humans out of the clay of the earth (*adamah*).”

If that is true, then our fate as humans is mysteriously bound together with the fate of the earth.

We came from the earth and to the earth we shall return.

There is no doubt that we are of the earth. We are connected to this earth, our home.

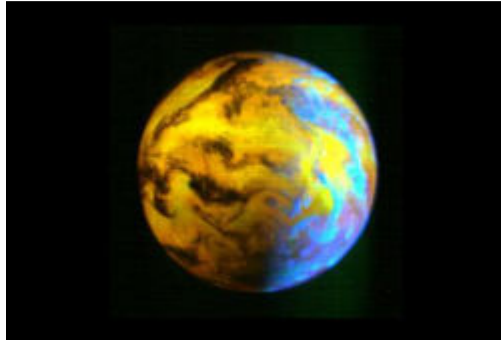
In Genesis, we are called to be protectors/stewards of the earth from which we are made.

Are we not here in the garden to serve? Is not service the purpose of our God-given power!

Our sinfulness, then, becomes our failure to live according to our true and original calling as guardians with God of God's creation. If we are redeemed to take care of the earth as we should, then the earth also begins to be saved because of our care and compassion for it.

If salvation from our sin is the theme of Lent, then, let us put it in its proper cosmic, creational context. God's salvation in Jesus Christ is of the *whole* of creation. Let us not forget this.

The “Green” Ash Wednesday Prayer Service



Leader:

Let us take a silent moment to be conscious of God’s presence in us and in all of Creation; the God who has breathed life into our nostrils and whose very breath keeps us in existence!

Without this breath we no longer exist!

Silence

Psalm 24 (In choir)

The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
for he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the waters.

Who may ascend the hill of the LORD?
Who may stand in his holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to an idol
or swear by what is false.

He will receive blessing from the LORD
and vindication from God his Savior.
Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

Who is he, this King of glory?
The LORD Almighty—
he is the King of glory.

Glory to the Father.....

Leader:

The earth is at the same time Mother;
She is mother of all.
For contained in her
Are the seeds of all.
The earth of humankind
Contains all moistness
All verdancy
All germinating power.
It is in so many ways fruitful
Yet it forms not only the basic
Raw material for humankind
But also the substance of God's Son.
(Hildegard of Bingen)





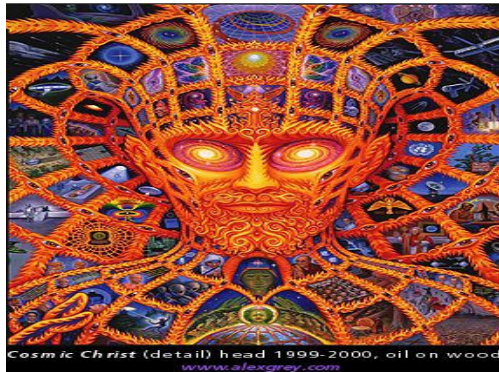
All:

Ask the loveliness of the earth,
Ask the loveliness of the sea,
Ask the loveliness of the wide airy spaces,
Ask the loveliness of the sky,
Ask the order of the stars,
Ask the sun, making the daylight with its beams.
Ask the moon tempering the darkness of the night that follows,
Ask the living things that move in the water...
Their loveliness is their confession.
And all these lovely but immutable things,
Who has made them, But Beauty immutable!
(St. Augustine)

Reader 3:

“It is the duty of Christians and all who look to God as creator
To protect the environment by restoring a sense of reverence
For the whole of God’s creation.”
(John Paul 11)





Hymn

The melody is the well-known **Amazing Grace**.

THE COSMIC CHRIST

1. Amazing is the Christ who died
To void all sin and curse,
Just as amazing is his life
That fills the universe.
2. The risen Christ is more than one
Who waits on some far shore;
In, with and under ev'ry thing
Christ is the living core.
3. The hidden Christ sustains for us
The blueprint of the skies,
The wisdom in each fragile form,
The soul that lights the eyes.
4. The cosmic Christ moves deep below
To heal the wounds within,

When all creation groans in pain
Because of human sin.

5. The universe hails the Christ, the One
Who reconciles all things,
'Til all creation rises new
With healing in her wings.

6. As Christ unites the universe,
Restores this Earth once more,
A cosmic song reverberates,
A rich symphonic score.

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Sobering Realities; Consider Our Failure To Serve

Reader 4:

Every minute 52 acres of tropical forest are lost.

Every minute 50 tons of fertile topsoil are blown off.

Every minute 12,000 tons of carbon dioxide are added to the atmosphere.

Every hour 1,693 acres of productive dry land become desert.

Every day 250,000 tons of sulfuric acid fall as acid rain in the Northern Hemisphere.

Every day around 100,000 chemical compounds are injected into the land, rivers and seas.

Every day millions of tons of sludge and solid waste are dumped into the oceans.

Every day billions of tons of CO₂ are released into the air.

(Robert Muller. Assistant Secretary General of the UN, 2009)





Canticle 12 A Song of Creation (In Choir)

Invocation

Glorify the Lord, all you works of the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

In the firmament of his power, glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

The Cosmic Order

Glorify the Lord, you angels and all powers of the Lord,
O heavens and all waters above the heavens.

Sun and moon and stars of the sky, glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, every shower of rain and fall of dew,
all winds and fire and heat.

Winter and Summer, glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, O chill and cold,
drops of dew and flakes of snow.

Frost and cold, ice and sleet, glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, O nights and days,
O shining light and enfolding dark.

Storm clouds and thunderbolts, glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

The Earth and its Creatures

Let the earth glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, O mountains and hills,
and all that grows upon the earth,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, O springs of water, seas, and streams,
O whales and all that move in the waters.

All birds of the air, glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, O beasts of the wild,
and all you flocks and herds.

O men and women everywhere, glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

The People of God

Let the people of God glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, O priests and servants of the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Glorify the Lord, O spirits and souls of the righteous,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

You that are holy and humble of heart, glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

Doxology

Let us glorify the Lord: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
praise him and highly exalt him forever.

In the firmament of his power, glorify the Lord,
praise him and highly exalt him forever. ✠



Reader 5:

Reading: Romans 8: 18-25

“I consider the sufferings of this present world are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we await for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope; for who hopes for what one sees! But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with patience!”

The Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

Leader:

The healing of the blind man with mud in John 9:1-7 is connected with man’s creation out of the soil of the earth in Genesis 2:7. Jesus continues this *work of creation* begun by his Father.

He heals.

We, too, share in this work of healing; allowing ourselves to be healed, healing others and healing the earth.

Let us listen “with new ears” to God speaking to us today.



Gospel John 9:1-7

“As Jesus walked along, he saw a man born blind. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s *work* might be revealed in him. We must *work* the *works* of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work.

As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he said this he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence 3 minutes (Reflective Music)

Reflect: How can we continue God’s work of healing in this world?

What role do we have to play as co-creators with God in saving this Earth, God’s very creation?

Is my God the God of all creation or just the God of human beings?



Lenten Litany (In choir)

We fast from judging others but feast on patience.

We fast from apparent differences but feast on unity of all life.

We fast from words that pollute but feast on words that affirm.

We fast from complaining but feast on appreciation.

We fast from bitterness and anger but feast on forgiveness and mercy.

We fast from discouragement but feast on hope.

We fast from suspicion but feast on trust.

We fast from idle gossip but feast on purposeful silence.

We fast from problems that overwhelm but feast on prayer that strengthens.

Ritual Action



To show that we are ready to commit ourselves to the great work of reconciliation with self, others, the earth and our God during this season, I invite you to come forward to the bowl of scented oil, dip your finger in the oil and rub it in the palms of your hands as a sign of your trust and commitment.

Reflective Music

“Healing” by Monica Brown



Leader:

And so we begin the forty days of Lent.

During these days I am inviting you to go forth and contemplate our God, our Savior Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, our role as Co-Creators with God, our relationship with the Earth and Earth's relationship with us.

Let us explore our wonderful connectedness with the Mystery of the universe and the Mystery of our loving God! Let us imagine all as One!

Live Jesus in Our Hearts! Forever!

The Jewish Hasidic tradition teaches that everyone should have two pockets

in their coats with two slips of paper.

One slip says: "I am only dust and ashes."

The other "For me the whole universe was created."

