

Upper Room: July/August 2021

Host or designated reader/leader begins the Upper Room prayer and study hour by first reading this message from Fr. David:

Dear friends in Christ:

We just thought about our home in the next world (Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory) let's back up and consider this one... Earth. Earth is a gift from God. It has many wonders and diverse beauty. As a place for humans to live, it's a mixed bag. It can be good and it can be very, very bad. The Earth itself isn't bad but it's the un-human-like inhabitants' selfishness and misuse of this place and of her natural resources that can lead us to know evil upon evil in this place (not to mention how we disobey God's moral law – the 10 Commandments). Think about the poppy plants that grow on the hills of Columbia or the financial transactions which extend poverty's grip on the poor from the richest place on earth (Wall Street). Think about how much food is wasted in schools and hospitals and around our own table and from our overstocked refrigerators. Think about the physical sciences that have led to developing the nuclear bomb or the medical sciences that have engineered efficient ways to abort babies.

The Earth was meant to be good and God saw it that way. He designed it to be a home for humans and we can even live in Arctic cold, Desert heat, Mountain range and Ocean tide. What does that say about God's will and His design of us and the earth we live on? Let's examine a few things about the Earth as we ponder the footstool of God. Fr. David

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

L: Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth Your Spirit, O Lord, and they shall be created.

R: And you shall renew the face of the earth

L: Let us pray – God our Father, pour out the gifts of your Holy Spirit on the world. You sent the Spirit on Your Church to begin the teaching of the Gospel; now let the Spirit continue to work in the world through the hearts of all who believe. Through Christ our Lord.

R: Amen

L: You, O Lord, will open my lips.

R: And my tongue shall announce Your praise.

L: Incline unto my aid, O God.

R: O Lord, make haste to help me.

L: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

R: As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen

Lesson

"We know neither the moment of the consummation of the earth and of man, nor the way in which the universe will be transformed. The form of this world, distorted by sin, is passing away, and we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, in which happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in the hearts of men."

"Far from diminishing our concern to develop this earth, the expectancy of a new earth should spur us on, for it is here that the body of a new human family grows, foreshadowing in some way the age which is to come. That is why, although we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress clearly from the increase of the kingdom of Christ, such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society."

The latter is from CCC 1048 and 1049

Why should we care about the Earth if it is passing away?

Can you conceive of this new Earth? Righteousness and happiness in the hearts of all? What will be gone (banished from the new Earth?)

Earthly progress... can you name any in the last 2,000 years?

Can you identify any increase in the kingdom of Christ in the last 2,000 years?

More from CCC...

344 There is a *solidarity among all creatures* arising from the fact that all have the same Creator and are all ordered to his glory:

May you be praised, O Lord, in all your creatures, especially brother sun, by whom you give us light for the day; he is beautiful, radiating great splendor, and offering us a symbol of you, the Most High. . .

May you be praised, my Lord, for sister water, who is very useful and humble, precious and chaste. . .

May you be praised, my Lord, for sister earth, our mother, who bears and feeds us, and produces the variety of fruits and dappled flowers and grasses. . .

Praise and bless my Lord, give thanks and serve him in all humility. (end paragraph)

In your opinion what else can be praised in the name of the Lord from your understanding of Creation?

346 In creation God laid a foundation and established laws that remain firm, on which the believer can rely with confidence, for they are the sign and pledge of the unshakeable faithfulness of God's covenant. For his part man must remain faithful to this foundation, and **respect the laws** which the Creator has written into it.

How does pollution or other environmental infraction (i.e. poaching) defy God's law of creation as a foundation? Discuss

347 Creation was fashioned with a view to the Sabbath and therefore for the worship and adoration of God. **Worship is inscribed in the order of creation.** As the rule of St. Benedict says, nothing should take precedence over "the work of God", that is, solemn worship. This indicates the right order of human concerns.

Liturgy is the work of the people too... discuss. Why does all creation lean toward the purpose of rest and worship?

349 The *eighth day*. But for us a new day has dawned: the day of Christ's Resurrection. The seventh day completes the first creation. The eighth day begins the new creation. Thus, **the work of creation culminates in the greater work of redemption.** The first creation finds its meaning and its summit in the new creation in Christ, the splendor of which surpasses that of the first creation.

Can you correlate the 4 seasons of the earth with the work of our redemption? If the work of creation culminates in the greater work of redemption, what is it about creation that bears this truth or makes it come to light? (Tough question. I think part of the answer is found in answer to first question and by considering creation's design and the Designer.)

2415 The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity. Use of the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. **Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute;** it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation.

Discuss objectively as you can the greatest environmental threat we face locally, nationally and worldwide and discuss timelines and if they can be reversed.

What can you do to protect God's footstool?

Do you feel a sense of responsibility for future generations of earthlings?

Prayer

Together recite St. Francis' Canticle of Creatures

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
All praise is Yours, all glory, all honor and all blessings.
To you alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.

Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
by which You cherish all that You have made.

Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water,
So useful, humble, precious and pure.

Praised be You my Lord through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You my Lord through our Sister,
Mother Earth who sustains and governs us,
producing varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.
Praise be You my Lord through those who grant pardon
for love of You and bear sickness and trial.
Blessed are those who endure in peace,
By You Most High, they will be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord through Sister Death,
from whom no-one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin!
Blessed are they she finds doing Your Will.
No second death can do them harm.
Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks,
And serve Him with great humility. Amen