

Thursday, July 13, 2017 - Day 193 – Job 37-39, Psalm 8, Galatians 4

The ancient Celts had a term for describing a place where heaven and earth come closer together. It is a place that brings you out of the everyday and a little closer to God. They called this a “thin place.” We all have our thin places. For some it is a huge cathedral with magnificent music, for others it is along a shoreline or deep within the woods.

We are in the midst of summer. Psalm 8 places me at the ocean’s edge with a slight summer breeze blowing and the smell of the salt air filling my lungs. As I stand on the beach I look up at the stars and fall into one of my thin places. The stars and the cosmos above me, the oceans with God’s creatures below the sea in front of me, and other countries across the expanse of the ocean in front of me. It makes me wonder at the vastness of your creation. As a Franciscan, I see God’s handiwork and presence in all that is before me.

When I view the world with that Franciscan lens, when the psalmist says,
“...what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet...”
I see God making us stewards of his creation not giving us dominions to squander it.

Secular society has the ability to argue against what they might call environmentalism. However, we as Christians have a duty to protect that which God has created, as we are “little lower than God”. Over and over again we see monasteries, friaries, convents and other religious organizations that are or have “gone green”. They have built structures that are ecologically friendly and have worked to conserve, recycle, and be cognizant of their impact on the environment. Many of these were years prior to Pope Francis's ecology encyclical *Laudato Si* in which he wrote, “When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them.” They have done this because their religious calling, their living in community has brought them to a place where they realize they are stewards of God’s creation.

As far back as 1998, the Bishops of the Anglican Communion provided scriptural and theological justification for the involvement of the Church in caring for creation.

As stewards of the wonderful gift that God has allowed us to be part of, it is our Christian duty to help protect and sustain his creation that is our shared environment. The next time you stand in awe and look at the heavens, the work of God’s fingers, the moon and the stars know that it is a gift that we must take care of.

I leave you with St. Francis’ *Canticle of the Sun*.

O most High, almighty, good Lord God,

to you belong praise, glory, honor, and all blessing!
Praised be my Lord God with all creatures;
and especially our brother the sun,
which brings us the day, and the light;
fair is he, and shining with a very great splendor:
O Lord, he signifies you to us!
Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon,
and for the stars,
which God has set clear and lovely in heaven.
Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind,
and for air and cloud, calms and all weather,
by which you uphold in life all creatures.
Praised be my Lord for our sister water,
which is very serviceable to us,
and humble, and precious, and clean.
Praised be my Lord for brother fire,
through which you give us light in the darkness:
and he is bright, and pleasant, and very mighty,
and strong.
Praised be my Lord for our mother the Earth,
which sustains us and keeps us,
and yields diverse fruits,
and flowers of many colors, and grass.
Praised be my Lord for all those who pardon
one another for God's love's sake,
and who endure weakness and tribulation;
blessed are they who peaceably shall endure,
for you, O most High, shall give them a crown!
Praised be my Lord for our sister,
the death of the body,
from which no one escapes.
Woe to him who dies in mortal sin!
Blessed are they who are found walking
by your most holy will,
for the second death shall have no
power to do them harm.
Praise you, and bless you the Lord,
and give thanks to God, and serve God
with great humility.

By The Rev. Philip Geliebter