

Online Resource - Lenten Reflections

The Grace of Place

GOD REVEALING, GOD INSPIRING, GOD CHALLENGING

"Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us." St Francis of Assisi

Introduction

During Lent, we are invited to read and reflect on the Sunday Gospels with our senses open to the grace of place. Having a heightened sense of place in the natural world enables us to grow in our reverence for God, and in our care for all creation.

This resource connects the Gospel of each Lenten Sunday in Year C with different aspects of place where God is *revealed*, where God *inspires* us and where God *challenges* us to be transformed, to embrace 'ecological conversion'.

The six topics are:

Wild Places



Urban Places



Rural Places



Sacred Places



Coastal Places



My Place



St Francis of Assisi prayed, "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us". We are earthlings. Jesus was an earthling. Hebrew Scripture tells the story that we were formed "from the earth" (adamah).

"In Jesus of Nazareth, God has become an Earth creature, one of us, part of the interconnected web of life, so that all of Earth's creatures might be transformed in God"

Denis Edwards, Jesus and the Natural World

The Earth is the place where we live, the first book of God's revelation. In the Genesis creation stories, God pronounces all creation very good, that is, full of grace.

Jesus was very much at home in his place in Galilee and the places he journeyed to. Those who visit where Jesus lived describe a feeling of a better understanding of not just the 'Jewishness' of the person Jesus, but also the significance of his words and the imagery he employed in his teaching.

Having a sense of place is an essential part of existence for the survival of all species, human and non-human as we share where we live. It is the reason for ears, eyes, noses and other sensate parts of bodies.

But as sensate human beings, we know an awareness of place is more than survival. We like to belong to a place. Places care for us. Place is in our memories, telling the stories of where we have come from and helping define who we are. Place informs our world view. It is part of our culture, where we celebrate our rituals.

Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* urges us to care for our common home because "this sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her." #2

In our mobile, noisy, technological urban age that is increasingly disconnected from the natural world, it is becoming more difficult for many of us to appreciate God's gift of place.

For Aboriginal peoples the place owns them. They do not own the place.

"My people have been so aware of Nature. It is natural that we will feel close to the Creator."

Miriam Rose Ungunmurr, Dadirri.

They know their country because they learn from the earliest age the proper behaviour through watching, listening and telling their stories. These stories connect them to their people, the water, the land, the sky, the animals and the plants. Their tracks through country follow the storylines that connect places. We are blessed in Australia to have the opportunity to learn from them.

By connecting to place we can learn deep listening and find God revealed there. We can meditate in wonder at the diversity of life. We can reflect in sadness that Earth, our common home is suffering. We can accept the challenges we face in helping care for our place.

"For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values."

Pope Francis, Laudato Si' #146



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