

Overcoming Ecological Violence Study Reflection Materials



Some general questions

What struck you positively in this story?

What did you find challenging, or difficult?

What can we learn from this story to apply to our own situation and journey towards peace?

Some further questions arising from the stories in the Ecological circle of peacemaking

What are the special/sacred places in our locality which speak to us of love and mystery?
What activities help us to reconnect with ourselves in Creation?

Who in our area can help us to learn more about the environment around us?

If we read the Bible through the eyes of the wider Creation what difference does it make?
What would the birds, animals, and plants like to say to us about how humans have been fulfilling the first commandment given by God in Genesis – to exercise God’s kind of dominion over the earth?

What, for us, are the greatest ‘sins against Creation’ in our day?
What are the key environmental issues in our backyard? What can we do about them?

*‘A kind of contemplation that reaches out to God through the environment, and that is aware of environmental concerns today, would naturally opt for ‘a green asceticism’, a program of life – enhancing deeds in preference to the rather negative and artificial ones of the past. With no less spiritual motivation and dedication than in the past, but ideally with a gentle sense of fun, one might consider the following or similar practices: save water or power, check the consumerist urge, refrain from the use of a car, recycle paper, glass etc, reduce unnecessary packaging, grow vegetables, compost and mulch in the garden, avoid disposables...Everything we touch is skin on the face of God. Any action can be a caress: no need for overkill. There is need for cheerfulness in accepting the personal limitation entailed in serious green efforts. There is joyfulness in knowing a way of wonder which gives rise to and is supported by, compassion, patience, gentleness and simplicity.’ (Eugene Stockton *Wonder: a Way to God* pp.65-66)*

Which good environmental practices do we follow? Do we look upon ecological stewardship as a burden or a joy, a response to wonder at the world?

What difference does it make to see our good environmental practices as acts of prayer and spiritual discipline? In what ways can traditional Christian virtues (patience, forbearance, joy, love, peace etc) be seen in our environmental practice?

SEEDS OF PEACE

Some further thoughts for reflection and discussion

Look, dear people of Australia and behold this vast continent of yours. It is your home! The place of your joys and pains, your endeavours and your hopes. And for all of you, Australians, the way to the Father's house passes through this land. Jesus Christ is the Way. (Pope John Paul II, address to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Alice Springs 1985)

Australians are looking to ways of bringing the Australian landscape into their spirituality: to 'come home to this land' spiritually and so to complete the sea crossing they or their ancestors have made from other homelands. It is only to be accepted that they look to Aboriginal spirituality in their quest. This was a spirituality (the Law, the Dreaming) which evolved in the landscape, over thousands of years, and which was expressed in practice, in story, in art, and in ceremony by those who were part of the landscape. There is no question of appropriating the Dreaming but rather of taking up the cue from Aborigines themselves that the Law can be read from the landscape.
(Eugene Stockton *Mysticism in the Australian Environment* pp.13-14)

*Invisible we see you, Christ beneath us,
With earthly eyes we see beneath us
Stones and dust and dross...
But with the eyes of faith,
We know you uphold.
In you all things consist and hold together.
The very atom is light energy.
The grass is vibrant.
The rocks pulsate. All is in flux:
Turn but a stone and an angel moves.
Underneath are the everlasting arms.
Unknowable we know you, Christ beneath us.*
(from a prayer of George McLeod)

Sister Joan Chittister, one of today's Christian prophets, reminds us that the insistent Benedictine call to humility involves commitment to justice and the healing of the earth itself. '*Jesus came in a crib,*' she affirms, '*so that we would all feel responsible for bringing goodness to life, for nurturing the impossible, for believing in the fragile things that make life worth living for everyone.*' This is central to the purpose of the spiritual practices of the Rule of Benedict: of humility, listening, hospitality, and peace. She says: '*to be contemplative, we must become converted to the consciousness that makes us one with the universe, in tune with the cosmic voice of God. We must become aware of the sacred in every element of life. We must bring beauty to birth in a poor and plastic world. We must restore the human community. We must grow in concert with the God who is within. We must be healers in a harsh society.*'