

TUESDAY REFLECTION 30. JUNE 2020

Last Tuesday's reflection took as one of its intentions Pope Francis' exhortation that we should 'heed the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth'. It is to this second that I should like to return today.

Let us go back to our Creation myth. In the Book of Genesis we read of how the earth was created with humans as part of it, and that we were given the fruits of the Garden for food - but we refused to accept our status as creatures, thinking that we knew better. The consequence was that our relation to the Earth turned sour, and instead of enjoying the gift of the fruits of the earth, we were going to have to work for them "through painful toil ... by the sweat of our brow". Thus an opposition was set up between humans and the Earth, the Earth becoming a hostile environment to be subdued - and we still live with that legacy today.

The Earth and humanity are both suffering - mainly as a result of our human mismanagement, manifested through environmental degradation, war, famine, poverty and increasing inequality. Both, the Earth and humanity, are in dire need of healing, which can only happen if the connection between us is restored, if our differences are resolved, if we make common purpose - in a word, if we are reconciled.

But what are we actually doing? Fellow-citizens, 'released' from lockdown, have been 'swarming' onto beaches and into parks, using gardens as toilets, not clearing up after themselves, leaving piles of litter, disregarding social distancing rules, and others are -quite rightly - incensed by such thoughtless conduct. But is this not a microcosm of what we humans are doing to the planet generally?