

WE ARE THE EARTH

The Zen Buddhist monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hahn writes:

At this very moment, the Earth is above you, below you, all around you, and even inside you. The Earth is everywhere. You may be used to thinking of the Earth as only the ground beneath your feet. But the water, the sea, the sky, and everything around us comes from the Earth. We often forget that the planet we are living on has given us all the elements that make up our bodies. The water in our flesh, our bones, and all the microscopic cells inside our bodies all come from the Earth and are part of the Earth. The Earth is not just the environment we live in. **We are the Earth and we are always carrying her within us.**

Realising this, we can see that the Earth is truly alive. We are a living, breathing manifestation of the beautiful and generous planet. Knowing this, we can begin to transform our relationship to the Earth. We can begin to walk differently and to care for her differently.

We will fall completely in love with the Earth. When we are in love with someone ... we do whatever we can for them, and this brings us great joy and nourishment. **That is the relationship each of us can have with the Earth. That is the relationship each of us must have with Earth if the Earth is to survive, and if we are to survive as well.**

Thich Nhat Hahn, Love Letter to the Earth, Parallax Press 2013

SISTER EARTH

In June 2015 the Vatican published Pope Francis's long-awaited encyclical on the environment, warning of 'serious consequences' if the world does not act on climate change. It is a heartfelt document, and even for those who may not consider themselves as Christians. It opens:

“Praise be to you, my Lord”. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is **like a sister with whom we share our life** and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.

“Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs”

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts... is reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

Nothing in this world is indifferent to us.

ISLAMIC DECLARATION on Climate Change

Launched in August 2015 at the International Islamic Climate Change Symposium, it begins:

In the name of Allah, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate.

God – Whom we know as Allah – has created the universe in all its diversity, richness and vitality: the stars, the sun and moon, the earth and all its communities of living beings.

All these reflect and manifest the boundless glory and mercy of their Creator. **Our planet has existed for billions of years and climate change in itself is not new...** Climate change in the past was also instrumental in laying down immense stores of fossil fuels from which we derive benefits today. Ironically, our unwise and short-sighted use of these resources is now resulting in **the destruction of the very conditions that have made our life on earth possible.**

The pace of global climate change today is of a different order of magnitude from the gradual changes that previously occurred. Our species, though selected to be a caretaker or steward (*khalifah*) on the earth, has been the cause of such corruption and devastation on it that **we are in danger ending life as we know it on our planet.**

Excessive pollution from fossil fuels threatens to destroy the gifts bestowed on us by God, whom we know as Allah – gifts such as a functioning climate, healthy air to breathe, regular seasons, and living oceans. But our attitude to these gifts has been short-sighted, and we have abused them. **What will future generations say of us, who leave them a degraded planet as our legacy?**

STIKKUN OLAM

The Jewish tradition teaches care for our planet in order to preserve that which God has created. Psalm 24 opens:

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof"

There is a Midrash (Rabbinic commentary Kohelet Rabbah) which Jewish environmentalists are fond of quoting:

“When God created the first human beings, God led them around the Garden of Eden and said: “Look at my works! See how beautiful they are—how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy My world; for if you do, there will be no one else to repair it.”

Following a Jewish prayer called Aleinu, the perfecting or the repairing of the world has become a major theme in modern Jewish theology. It is usually expressed as an activity, which must be done by humans in partnership with God.

It is an important concept in light of the task ahead in environmentalism.

In our ignorance and our greed, we have damaged the world and silenced many of the voices of the choir of Creation.

Now we must fix it.

There is no one else to repair it but us.

Rabbi Lawrence Troster