



# GIVE JOY TO THE FACE OF THE EARTH

CHRISTIAN THINKING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

BY MIMI IGNATIUS

This is a direct call to all humanity. Are you there? Our environment is rapidly deteriorating. Do you care about our natural resources? What is happening with the sea, the air, the landscape, the creatures, and the people? Who is to blame? Is it a foreign government or maybe a terrorist plot? No, the real perpetrators are carelessness and indifference. In fact, we are the cause. Can we be part of the solution? This is not about an earthly materialistic life. This is about being responsible for an incredible gift that has been taken for granted. Life is a precious gift from God. What have we done with the Earth that God provided to help shelter and sustain our lives until His awaited return?

The effect of neglect is painful and unacceptable. The abuse is evident. The environment is ripped and bruised with scars and wounds brought about by a series of over-indulgent generations. Global warming is consuming the earth. Climate change has impacted all life forms, especially animal life, by destroying their natural habitats.

Big money and self-interest tolerate disposal of waste upon vulnerable lands and seas, the home of the innocent. Unnecessary destruction of forests results in the loss of homes of humans and wildlife alike in order to erect commercial dwellings. Acid rain, from over-industrialization of cities and communities, is polluting waters, decaying historic structures, and impairing vegetation. From every outlook, the earth is deteriorating before our eyes.

How do we correct our past blunders? A scope of possibilities exists. Nature's grandeur may never return to its original magnificence, but the devastation can be decelerated. If we really want to repair the damage, we must first begin to think differently about our environment and use Christian ethics to make sensible decisions. We need to be accountable for our actions and we need to become more engaged in discourse about the environment. Our consciences can no longer allow ourselves to participate in recklessness. It is time for our cavalier shrugs and "whatever" mind-set to be

replaced with principled thinking. Conserve energy, use energy efficient products, preserve wildlife habitats, and recycle. Cliché as it may sound, actions speak louder than words. We need to change our lifestyle, set our priorities, be resourceful and not wasteful, and teach others. You can make a difference in your home, your community, and your world.

Making a change for the better is part of a Christian's daily spiritual life. If we take the time and look closely, we will see God in everything. In the heights and in the depths, He is there (Psalm 139). The more we strive to rid our environment of litter and pollution, the more we will be able to appreciate God's mercy by seeing it in His creations. In every layer of creation, is the Creator Himself. Who can see a piece of art and avoid looking at the signature of the artist. The earth's breathtaking beauty of glaciers and waterfalls, roses and sycamore trees, polar bear cubs and soaring eagles, oceans and forests all testify to the Almighty God, their Creator. Consider the earth an entrusted endow-





ment for us to wisely use and share and not an object for us to foolishly threaten and abuse. Even at the peak of nature's rage, God's imprint is in it all; recall how the frightened disciples' distress was eased when they recognized Christ the Lord calming the storms as He gently treaded upon the rough seas.

Respect me, says the earth, for I am His footstool (Isaiah 66:1; Matthew 5:35; Acts 7:49). Remember when He lived among us, as one of us, He walked on this terrain and ate from these seas. The lowly barn animals warmed the Holy Infant's cradle in the awkward manger beneath the beaming star. The river waters engulfed Him in baptism, and the Holy Spirit descended from heaven upon Him. Sturdy mountains heard His sermons and the highest hill saw His glorious transfiguration. When the time came near, on bent knees, He prayed in a garden. His parables resembled the language of the earth in what it has to offer, differences in soil, a vine dresser, a vineyard, and an unforgotten sparrow. The hidden sun rays and the explosion

of clouds marked their shame at His crucifixion. He put in plain words the real meaning of the fruit of the Spirit so that Christians would learn to live productive lives resembled by the sweetest fruit, rich in virtue, unlike the fraudulent fig tree. With the finest wheat and the fruit of the vine, He instituted the great Mystery for the remission of sins for all generations to partake (Divine Liturgy). He accepted the earthly to give us the heavenly, and throughout it all, He taught us to have respect for all life.

The heavens were first, then the earth, and then you and me. This was the order of creation. Each creation takes delight in praising God in a very special way. Psalm 148 highlights the desire and delight in praising the Lord. Praise is accepted from two realms of life: One source of praise comes "from the heavens ... in the heights ... all His angels ... all His hosts ... sun and moon ... stars of light ... heavens of heavens ... and waters above the heavens" are all commanded to praise Him. The other source of praise comes

"from the earth, You great sea creatures and all the depths; Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word; Mountains and all hills; Fruitful trees and all cedars; Beasts and all cattle; Creeping things and flying fowl; Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth; Both young men and maidens; Old men and children." In addition to the decree of praise, each cluster was given responsibilities towards humanity. His angels and hosts pray for us, the sun, moon, and stars give us days and seasons, the earth gives us food, shelter, and medicine. All in all, we are surrounded by nature's splendor. With His beautiful signature throughout all His creation, how then can we find it acceptable to share in the destruction of the earth which God so kindly and lovingly gave to us? Therefore, let us be mindful of our actions, steadfast in our petitions, and prayerful in every Divine Liturgy: "Give Joy to the Face of the Earth."

#### References

Nelson's NKJV Study Bible  
Divine Liturgies of Sts. Basil, Gregory, Cyril  
<http://www.livescience.com/environment/080709-new-natural-wonders.html>  
<http://www.epa.gov/>

