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'We have forgotten who we are'

by Rich Heffern

Eco Catholic

I learned after we had chosen the title for this blog that Eco Catholic can also mean 'Easter and Christmas Only Catholic.' Oh well, such is life. We early on decided that we would include on this blog regular updates on the seasons as they pass, on the night skies that present themselves to us when we look up, as the Earth makes its journey around the Sun, even including a 'star' of the month. We wanted to include a hefty dose of the bioregional vision -- that notion that the task of preserving the Earth is doable if we begin in our own backyards, neighborhoods and bio-regions -- those natural boundaries of the planet that provide us our food, water, weather, animal neighbors, plants and trees.

The purpose of these updates and reflections is to situate us solidly within the holy seasons of the planet on which we live and within the vast cosmos of which we are a part. Mindful of Fr. Thomas Berry's warning that we have sorely neglected the ages-old conversation the human has always had with the rivers, the oceans, the forests and the skies, I also think of the prayer that was included in the United Nations Environmental Sabbath Programme some years ago:

We have forgotten who we are
We have alienated ourselves from
the unfolding of the cosmos
We have become estranged from the movements
Of the earth
We have turned our backs on the cycles of life
We have forgotten who we are.
Now the forests are dying
And the creatures are disappearing,
And humans are despairing

We have forgotten who we are.

We ask forgiveness

We ask for the gift of remembering

We ask for strength to change

We have forgotten who we are.

Cosmologist Brian Swimme, in one of his video programs, talks about how humans, for hundreds of thousands of years, sat around evening campfires, spellbound -- telling stories, passing on knowledge and wisdom, crafting jokes, exploring culture, enjoying community. Now we do the same thing evenings ? spellbound in front of the television screen or computer monitor. Too often, the culture that is presented to us is that of consumerism. The end result is continued disconnection from the places where we live.

Catholicism is a religion of incarnation and sacrament. We're not, we hope, Eco-Catholics that just go to Mass on the two big holy days. We're interested in Eco-Catholicism that reconnects us with the movements of the Earth and the unfolding of the cosmos.

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