**Eco-prayer?**

Why might we alter the prayer Jesus taught?

Pope Francis has called on all people of good will “to heed the cry of the earth and the cries of the poor.” The Jesus prayer is silent about the earth, but now we can no longer be silent about our misuse of this gift of God.

Referring to God as “Father” characterizes God as a loving parent but has been used by Christians historically, and by many churches today, to justify male authority over women. *Abba*, the Aramaic word for father, is how Jesus prayed to the God he loved and who he knew loved him and all life. Might we pray to *Abba*, keeping Jesus foremost in our minds?

The phrase “who art in heaven” has led many to think of heaven as a place, above the material world. Yet, those with spiritual experiences bear witness that heaven is Love’s embrace.

In the ancient world ruled by kings, God was worshiped as King of kings. As we now struggle for the rule of law that will protect human rights and make justice possible, I suggest we pray for the strength to renew the earth, to care for the poor, and to repent for our abuse of the earth’s biosphere.

Temptation and evil remain significant threats, but I suggest we need to take responsibility for creating each as well as overcoming both.

Albert Einstein urged that we all “widen our compassion” for others. He was not thinking of nonhuman life, but I urge that we expand his compassion to include life on earth. Might this be our way of resisting temptation and evil?

Historian and Catholic monk, Thomas Berry, gave thanks for stars as “bestowers of grace,” because exploding supernovas have seeded the universe with the elements necessary for suns, planets, and life. Might we accept these star deaths as gifts that we have done nothing to deserve, which is what grace means. Might we know *Abba*, the God of Jesus, as Light as well as Love and the Spirit of the cosmos?

Many near-death survivors have testified to their experience of mind-opening Light and heart-filling Love, and to feeling back “home." There is empirical evidence that these experiences for most were “life-transforming.”

John Newton wrote the words to “Amazing Grace” after his conversion experience. He rejected his life as a slave captain, renounced slavery, and affirmed the grace he knew was saving with these words: “Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found; was blind but now I see.”

Therefore, may this be our eco-prayer . . .

***Abba*, God of Jesus.**

**May we heed the cry of the earth
and the cries of the poor.**

**May we live humbly so the soil will revive,
more species survive, and nature thrive.**

**May we resist temptation and evil
by widening out compassion for life on earth.**

**May we mourn our abuse of the earth’s biosphere**

**and repent of the harm we have done.**

***Abba*, Spirit of the cosmos, Light and Love,**

**May your grace lead us home.**

\*Brian Thomas Swimme, *Cosmogenesis* (Catapult, Kindle, 2022), 293-295.