

Praying for the Earth by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee

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Prayer is the simplest and most natural way to communicate with the Divine. Prayer is the heart speaking.

There are the prescribed prayers, the rituals of inner communion. But there are also our personal prayers, our way of being with the Divine, with the sacred that is our deepest nature and that of the world around us. In whatever way we are drawn to pray, there is a pressing need at this time to include the earth in our prayers.

We are living in a time of ecological devastation, in which our materialistic culture has had a catastrophic effect on the ecosystem. Our rivers are toxic, the rainforests slashed and burned, vast tracts of land made a wasteland due to our insatiable desires for oil, gas and minerals. We have raped and pillaged and polluted the earth until it is in a dangerous state of imbalance we call climate change. If we dare to listen, creation itself is now calling to us, sending us signs of its imbalance. We can see these signs in the increasing floods and droughts, feel it in a land that has been poisoned with pesticides, and those whose hearts are open may hear the cry of the world soul, of the spiritual being of our mother the earth. It is a cry of need and despair, that humanity who was supposed to be the guardian of the planet has forgotten its responsibility and instead desecrates and destroys the earth on a global scale.

The earth needs our prayers more that we know. It needs us to acknowledge its sacred nature, that it is not just something to use and dispose. Many of us know the effectiveness of prayers for others, how healing and help is given, even in the most unexpected ways. There are many ways to pray for the earth. It can be helpful first to acknowledge that it is not “unfeeling matter” but a living being that has given us life. And then we can sense its suffering: the physical suffering we see in the dying species and polluted waters—the deeper suffering of our collective disregard for its sacred nature. Would we like to be treated just as a physical object to be used and abused? Would we like our sacred nature, our soul, to be denied?

For centuries it was understood that the world was a living being with a soul, and that we are a part of this being. Once we remember this in our minds and in our hearts, once we hear the cry of our suffering, dying world, our prayers will flow more easily and naturally. We will be drawn to pray in our own way. There is the simple prayer of placing the world as a living being within our hearts when we inwardly offer our self to the Divine. We remember the sorrow and suffering of the world in our hearts, and ask that that the world be remembered, that divine love and mercy flow where it is needed. That even though we continue to treat the world so badly, divine grace will help us and help the world—help to bring the earth back into balance. We need to remember that the power of the Divine is

more than that of all the global corporations that continue to make the world a wasteland, even more than the global forces of consumerism that demand the life-blood of the planet. We pray that the Divine of which we are all a part can redeem and heal this beautiful and suffering world.

Sometimes it is easier to pray when we feel the earth in our hands, when we work in the garden tending our flowers or vegetables. Or when we cook, preparing the vegetables that the earth has given us, mixing in the herbs and spices that give us pleasure. Or making love, as we share our body and bliss with our lover, we may feel the tenderness and power of creation, how a single spark can give birth. Then our lovemaking can be an offering to life itself, a fully-felt remembrance of the ecstasy of creation.

The divine oneness of life is within and all around us. Sometimes walking alone in nature we can feel its heartbeat and its wonder, and our steps become steps of remembrance. The simple practice of 'walking in a sacred manner' in which with every step we take we feel the connection with the sacred earth is one way to reconnect with the living spirit of the earth.

There are so many ways to pray for and with creation, to listen within and include the earth in our spiritual practice.

Watching the simple wonder of a dawn can be a prayer in itself. Or when we hear the chorus of birds in the morning we may sense that deeper joy of life and awake to its divine nature. While at night the stars can remind us of what is infinite and eternal within us and within the world. Whatever way we are drawn to wonder or pray, what matters is always the attitude we bring to this intimate exchange: whether our prayers are heartfelt rather than just a mental repetition. It is always through the heart that our prayers are heard, even if we first make the connection in our feet or hands. Do we really feel the suffering of the earth, sense its need? Do we feel this connection with creation, how we are a part of this beautiful and suffering being? Then our prayers are alive, a living stream that flows from our heart. Then every step, every touch, will be a prayer for the earth, a remembrance of what is sacred. We are a part of the earth calling to its Creator, crying in its time of need.

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