

Peace and Justice Prayer: Earth Overshoot Day

Thursday, 28 July, was Earth Overshoot Day, which marks the date in a year when humanity has used all the ecological resources that Earth regenerates during that entire year according to Onke Nguka who writes for the Daily Maverick. The earth/nature is operating at a deficit because of humanity's ecological resource demands. Humanity has exceeded nature's ecological resources supply, with its demanding lifestyles and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production happening at a rate beyond what nature can regenerate over a period of a year.

Simply put: We are using too much and we are caring too little about the earth which is our only home and our only place to live.

Let us pray:

Dear God of the air, the streams, of the fog, of every single tree and leaf and flower, help us to notice how these leaves, plants, rivers, are actually acts of love and deep devotion.

We pray for the humility required to contest and reject anthropocentric thinking - that humans are the only reason the earth exists - for we actually share this planet with animals, insects, fungi, plants, fruits, vegetables and trees which sustain our lives and are worthy of being treated with love and respect.

God help us to recognise that caring, knowing and then doing, living simply so that others may simply live is a political and ethical act and we need to be moved into action. We also need to remember who and what is excluded in the 'others' who are also simply trying to live, for we are getting to a point where if these resources are depleted then human life will no longer be possible on earth.

Dear God we need to be reminded that it matters how we make demands about uninterrupted electricity supplies and the endless supply of WIFI we think we can't live without. Help us recognise that even zoom calls and every email, every action on the internet also burns up fossil fuels, demands energy, often involves cruel child labour and uses the earth in ways that are not life-giving. This all matters.

Dear God forgive us for the ways we participate in the unfair distribution of resources in South Africa and our continued inaction around the unjust distribution of resources. For example, there will always be more traffic cops visible at a national rugby match on Saturday afternoon than any school when the bell rings at the end of the day, this is a small yet urgent reminder that we live in a country where only some people's time (like the rugby spectators) and some actions (rugby spectators' need to get to and from a match in a reasonable period of time) are more important than all the children who attend school being able to cross dangerous roads and get home safely- some are always more important than others. This is a use of resources which has not been rethought for decades. This continued lack of imagination and selfishness about how a city could work, speaks to individual solutions to what are global challenges.

Dear God, you created forest ferns and humpback whales, the Milky Way and the ebb and flow of tides which sustains all life, from the forest ferns to the humpback whales because everything is interconnected. As humans if we could recognise this radical notion that everyone already belongs, we can move away from the idea that we are 'separate from' and that our individual needs are always at the expense of who and what matters more.

Help us use less, care more and unconditionally love the earth which is the source of life for all ...

Let us pray the prayer for Africa.