

What fun for any three-year-old to be allowed to mix soil and water and make mud pies, I remember doing so myself and mum gracefully declining to eat my masterpiece! In the second of the creation stories in Genesis we are told how out of the earth God moulded and formed human beings, just like making those mud pies but with a lot more TLC! then having breathed life into these human forms charged them with taking care of the of the earth from which they came.

Human beings, unlike the rest of creation were formed by God's own hands and had his own breath of life breathed into them! Set apart from the rest of creation which was spoken into being and life with a word from God. As human beings this creation account reminds us we have a connection to this world that is unique among God's creation

We are inextricably linked to this earth; our very physical being is literally part of it. Our bodies are formed from the elements of the earth, and when we die our bodies return to the earth. 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust' is a phrase that is sadly familiar to anyone who has attended a funeral and serves as a reminder to us of this unique connection.

We totally depend on the earth to meet all our physical needs; food and water, the means to provide us with shelter, clothing and the resources that keep us warm and dry and allow us to travel great distances with ease.

All these ways in which this earth provides for our needs depend on our ability to sensitively manage and care for the valuable resources the earth gives us. As beings so inexplicably linked to the earth it is becoming more and more apparent that we can impact, both positively and negatively, the fragile eco systems of this planet we call home.

Day to day how our land is managed, how animals are treated, and how we take care of our natural resources such as water and air are important as they are part of our creator God's plan to resource and provide for *His* creation which includes us, and he has entrusted us with responsibility for it, All of it! If we were to take some time out and just think about that, really think about it would be no surprise if we were to feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the task before us.

Each harvest we are reminded of our dependence on this world to sustain us. every time a crop is gathered in we are literally blessed with good things.

It is getting more and more difficult to ignore the signs that the eco system of the earth is under siege by gross human mismanagement. As human beings we tend to focus on the here and now. If you don't think so then for example look at the lack of planning for a pension among the young, and not so young citizens of Ireland which

will likely result in a harvest of years of poverty for them in their old age. How we behave now affects not just our future but the future of those who come after us.

Caring for the environment is a powerful way of showing those who come after us that we care for not only ourselves but them. The Anglican communion in 1984 introduced the 5 marks of mission that express the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic and integral mission. And part of that mission comes under the heading Treasure. Striving to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth, Variation in climate is felt most keenly by those who are encumbered by poverty. Our choices can positively impact the lives of the poorest in our world by choosing for example to purchase Fairtrade goods demonstrating our desire to see justice for the poor who were not receiving a fair wage for their often backbreaking manual labour. The better informed we are the better decisions we can make about our environmental lifestyle choices.

We are fortunate to be able to live in Ireland. Despite the extremes of weather that have impacted us in the last year, from snow and floods to drought, there is still a harvest to be gathered in. it may be smaller than it usually is and that will soon be evident when we visit the shops and see higher prices being charged for vegetables that missed out on the rain at a crucial time in their growth cycle. But we have had a harvest! The earth we have so badly treated has once again offered up a bounty of good things. And we have reason to be thankful and to celebrate!

Harvest grants us an opportunity to thank God for blessing the hard work of those who prepared the land, sowed the seed, and kept weeds and predators away so their crops could flourish. It is also a time of reflection as the success of the harvest is contemplated. And decisions made that will decide what next years crops will be, and the preparation required to bring that to fruition. Just as we can only judge if a harvest has been good by the fruit/grain etc that it produces, so too it is with our spiritual lives, it is not judged by the growth achieved but by the crop that is gathered in. and so while many gathered here today may not rely on farming for a living, we each have an opportunity to produce a fruitful harvest of spiritual fruits, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control. And now as we thank God for the bounty of this year's food harvest, let us assess and thank God for the spiritual fruits our lives have produced over the last year, and reassess where we need to alter what we're doing so as to see a bigger harvest next year.