

WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

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Easter for the Earth

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This past week Christians and Jews celebrated their most important holy days. For Jews, it was the Passover, the day of remembrance of God's deliverance of a people from slavery and oppression. For Christians, it was Holy Week, when we remember the arrest, trial and death of Jesus, and his gift of new life on Easter Day.

Interestingly, this year "Earth Day" coincided with the Friday of the holiest week of the year for Christians and Jews. Some church folks didn't quite know what to do about it. It seemed out of place, this non-traditional holiday in the midst of the "real" holy days.

For some folks Earth Day remains a non-holiday, observed only by those with too much time on their hands, too much money in their pockets and not enough work to do. But others who were simply too busy between Passover and Easter Day may wish to revisit this holiday in retrospect. For Christians, Jesus, the Human One, images to us the coming together of the "earthy" and the divine. On Good Friday, as we remembered the suffering and death of Jesus, we lifted up the suffering and death of many sisters and brothers at the hands of the powerful, and of those who disregard the vulnerable of the Earth and the Earth itself.

Many women and men who do not think of themselves as particularly religious are quite committed to protecting the oceans, the rivers, the mountains and all the creatures that dwell in them. Indeed, the environmental movement is a "green faith" that calls forth a great deal of dedication. Earth Day can be seen as a "post-Christian" holiday for the non-religious. As a believer, I greatly appreciate their commitment to God's creation, although they may not call it that. They may not be singing "Alleluia" on Easter, but they're doing godly work indeed.

The poor suffer the worst consequences of all that ails the Earth. If there is drought, poor farmers all over the world lose their crops. If there are floods, those who live in shanty towns, mud houses, and uninsured homes lose all they've got. Poor fishermen bear the brunt of the Gulf oil spill to this day. Whether disasters are man made, or merely the result of human abuse of the Earth, it's the poor, those with the least resources, who pay the most. From Passover to Easter Sunday we remembered the oppression and the struggle for liberation of all God's people. Let's hope that the celebrations lead us to lives lived in harmony with each other and with Creation. Only then will there be an Easter Sunday for the Earth and all its creatures.

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