



Confederazione Mondiale Mornese Exallieve ed Exallievi delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice

Via Gregorio VII, 133/B 00165 Roma

Tel. 06/39.37.51.31 C.F. 97070250580 www.exalliefma.org

“HUMBLE AND HIGHEST CREATURE” Walking with Mary, Mistress of Integral ecology

5. Mary, earth of Heaven

Linda Pocher, fma

"Looking at the world with wise eyes", as the Pope invites us to do by learning from Mary, means recognising in the elements of creation the imprint of God's love and the call He addresses us to correspond to love with love, taking care of every created thing entrusted to us. Along with water, the earth is fundamental to human survival and life. But the earth lies beneath our feet, so it can easily happen that we are distracted, that we forget its importance and value.

In the many manifestations of the climate crisis we are currently experiencing, a wise heart knows how to recognise the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor who are often such precisely because they are deprived of free and dignified access to the earth and its goods. A land to inhabit and cultivate, and descendants who can prolong beyond death the life of the fathers in their children and grandchildren, are the two faces of the one promise to which the God commits himself by making his covenant with Abraham.

Scripture, therefore, is well aware of the importance of the earth, in its concreteness as a source of subsistence and a place to dwell, as well as in its symbolic meaning, which refers to the fragility of the human being and his need to maintain a good relationship with the whole of Creation and with God.

If the first Creation account describes the birth of the universe from God's womb (Gen 1), the second Creation account presents God as a potter who moulds the first man from the earth, and as a farmer who plants and cultivates a garden in which human beings can live.

The genre of the tale, of course, is not historical, but symbolic. In many ancient cultures, the creation of the human being had to do with the earth, recognised as the great mother, from which all living beings receive life and nourishment. Sacred Scripture transposes and transforms this myth, which was certainly widespread in the land of Canaan. The author of Genesis, in fact, does not present the earth as a female divinity, but as an element of the reality created by God, which He, the only Creator, uses to shape human beings.

The Bible thus expresses our dependence on the rest of creation: despite being the only being created in the image and likeness of God, in fact, the human being is created last, after heaven and earth, after plants and animals (Gen 1:26-28). The whole creation could also subsist without the presence of man and woman, but man and woman could not survive without the other natural elements, thanks to which they find a home, nourishment and work, as custodians of the garden that God himself entrusts to them.

The life of the human being on earth, moreover, is marked by the need to learn from experience and to discern good from evil (cf. Jer 18:2-6). In the arena of history, among the other creatures to which he is connected, the human being made of earth thus experiences his fragility, his incompleteness, until he encounters the mystery of death, which tragically brings him back to his origin: the womb of the earth (Wis 9:13-18).

In the First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul recalls the account of the creation of Adam, the first human being, taken from the earth, to affirm that the true Adam is Christ, the human being from Heaven (1 Cor 15:45-49). As descendants of the first Adam, we too are made of earth, but thanks to the gift of the Spirit of the Risen One, the true Adam, we become sharers in the resurrection of Jesus, we discover that we are destined for Heaven.

Like Christ, we too will experience death as a passage, not as final defeat: the earth, where we will be buried, like Christ's tomb, will be a womb for us, from which we will rise to live forever in God.

Continuing St. Paul's reasoning, the Church Fathers compare Mary to the virgin earth, not yet cultivated, of the Genesis account, from which the Holy Spirit moulds the new humanity of the Son Jesus (Lk 1:35).

Mary, moreover, is the New Eve, who with her 'yes' opens to God the possibility of re-establishing communion with human beings, having been broken by the rejection of the first Eve. Mary, in her body and in her heart, is the land of Heaven: the fragile and humble place where God abides. Mary's attitude of acceptance, moreover, does not end at the moment of her Son's conception. Mary continually renews her 'fiat' through a multitude of small concrete actions that offer the Son of God made man the ground on which to rest his feet. Mary, in fact, is not only asked to give Christ a body, but to accompany him, in the time of his hidden life, on the long journey that awaits him to become fully man. A journey that requires care, attention and educational wisdom (Lk 2:41-52).

In his preaching, Jesus often used images taken from agricultural work and country life (Mt 6:25-34). Certainly, He was a great observer and, through parables, He wished to stimulate His listeners to look at the reality around them with His own gaze: the gaze of the wise man, capable of recognising in everyday life the signs of the presence and love of the Father.

It is very likely, moreover, that Jesus, at least in his childhood, helped Mary to cultivate a garden or a small field. In those days, in fact, even families of artisans owned a little land, in which to cultivate the necessities for daily sustenance.

In the so-called parables of growth, three characters often appear: the farmer; the seed; the soil (Mk 4:1-32). The seed represents the gift of God: his Word, his grace, his presence that anticipates on this earth the kingdom of heaven. The seed carries within itself the strength to germinate and bear fruit. The earth, on the other hand, represents the heart of the human being, created by God to receive his gift and be very fruitful. Bearing fruit, in other words, is not a choice we can make or not make! Being generative is the heart of the Christian vocation (Jn 15:16)! In the person of the farmer, finally, are normally represented those who collaborate with God in spreading his Word, beginning with Jesus, and continuing with his disciples of all times. The farmer, however, it is important to remember, has no control over the life of the seed! It is up to the farmer to sow, on the one hand, and on the other hand to care for the land, fostering the conditions that allow it to be, towards the seed, as welcoming as possible.

Walking in ecological conversion means learning to care for the earth and the seed, as a good farmer does, so that every creature can be respected and valued as a gift from God to the whole creation. For there is nothing lacking in creation that we may need in order to live, as long as we know how to share the gift, grow in solidarity and universal brotherhood. May Mary, our common Mother, help us and accompany us day by day on this long journey.