

LOVE IS PATIENT^[1]

*In returning and rest you shall be saved;
in quietness and in trust shall be your strength. (Is 30:15)*



As I write this, we are starting to lift restrictions placed on our communities by the respective Governments in Australia. Anxiety has been rife over the last ninety days or so. Initially, most were cooperative and conscientious to do as our leaders had decreed. Now, we are heading into a new space whereby the people in the shops, supermarkets and malls I have been frequenting are now starting to repopulate those places. Our leaders are warning us to be careful still so that we do not prompt a second wave. Yet people's reactions are interesting ranging from eager to return to normality to escape 'cabin fever' to saying 'I am happy with the quiet and slower pace of life'. I have noticed that impatience breeds impatience. I wonder what it would be like for patience to be contagious and grow in our various communities.

In recent days we have been witnessing mass gatherings in response to the unjust death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, USA. Those who have been gathering have defied the directives from the authorities not to assemble, in some cases with violent results. In Australia, the pain and despair of our first nation people have emerged in the collective consciousness to such an extent that many have been driven to protest in great numbers to identify their hurt from being oppressed. For change to happen the majority of the population needs to choose a cooperative path forward which requires patient and deliberate conversation.

In both the COVID-19 crisis and the re-emergence of the first people's voice, patience has been mostly evident yet tried. As regards the pandemic, you may have had personal experience where you have wanted to be closer to people. The physical distancing rules surrounding COVID-19 have prevented us from some intimate and celebratory moments, such as weddings, funerals, parish or community activities, etc. You may have even known or be related to someone with symptoms of the disease which caused alarm for you.

In relation to the first people's response to unjust or inappropriate treatment, your heart may have burned as you saw images or heard less than satisfactory responses by authorities with little empathy for the plight of long-suffering minorities. Patience has surely been tested over centuries. The choice to respond in a non-violent manner has been challenging and needed much courage for people to be peaceful and hold a position of integrity.



In the matter of Earth, she has suffered at the hands of humans exploiting her resources or ignoring the plight of fellow creatures. Earth has survived but the option of humankind to be a dominant force in taking advantage of all elements of creation means we are at risk of shortening our own existence and that of Earth. We have the choice to be responsive for a life-giving future. Those who have advocated for earth rights have taken that patient stance in the hope that, in time, all will be respectful of Mother Earth and give her a chance to continue to be a home that thrives in times to come. Sometimes, it feels for the patient and the meek that they may never inherit the earth (cf. Matt. 5:5). One can only admire their fortitude in the face of the raging forces to keep economies productive for the elite.^[2]

Earth does keep turning and providing for all its inhabitants as she has for millions of years. Humans have only been evident in Earth's history for the past few million years. When we survey the history of our Universe, humankind has only been around for less than one minute to midnight. Those of us who have participated in a Cosmic Walk know this to be true.^[3] Yet somehow the human race has perpetuated a narrative whereby it places itself at the pinnacle of creation as lords who believe God is on their side rather than being stewards who share responsibility with all creatures to ensure Earth lives to be the best it can be. The last fifty years has seen people emerge, such as Thomas Berry CP and Miriam MacGillis OP and many others, to assist us in opening our eyes to the reality that the Universe, and in turn Earth, is a community of subjects not a collection of objects.^[4] The Universe has patiently evolved over time and will continue to do so.

Berry has whimsically invited us to contemplate "what was Earth thinking when she brought us into being?" This poem, Earth's Desire^[5], was his response:



*To be seen
in her loveliness
to be tasted
in her delicious
fruits
to be listened to
in her teaching
to be endured
in the severity
of her discipline
to be experienced
as the maternal
source
whence we come
the destiny
to which we
return.*

This poem draws us to patiently listen to our journey upon this planet and to learn from her wisdom. We are encouraged to immerse ourselves into Earth's beauty, her disciplines of what we call natural disasters and natural wonders, to learn from Earth as mother, that we have been born, live and will die on this planet we call 'home'.

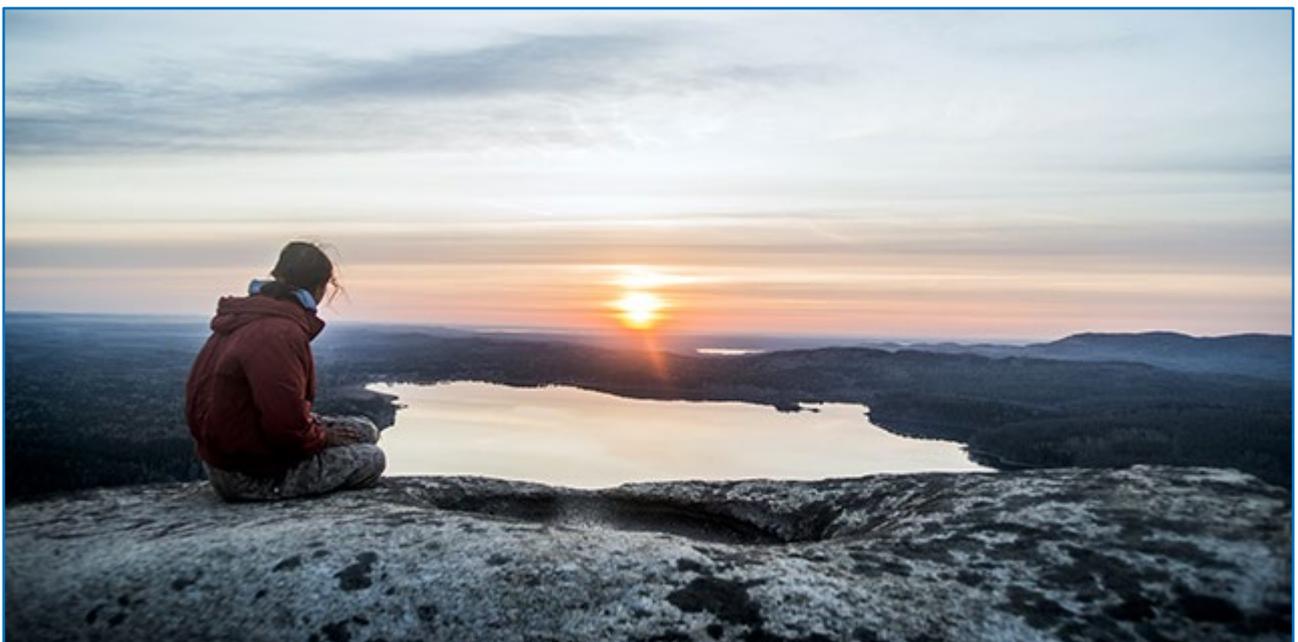
We are drawn into a relationship whereby the Mystery we call God has wrapped us in a 'compassionate curve that brings all things together'.^[6] In this embrace we are summoned to consider how the Universe has unfolded over billions of years. We are invited to experience with Earth as she uses the seasons to remind us to bask in glorious summer weather, to let things go in autumn time, to hibernate and recoup during our winters and allow the seeds maturing within us to bud and flower in our spring times, only to repeat this cycle over the years. This is a slow process and not to be hurried yet hurry we sometimes do.

Nikos Kazantzakis wrote, when contemplating afterwards, how he tried to hurry the process of a butterfly emerging from its cocoon because he was keen to see it emerge. The result for him was to see it struggle and die:

*This butterfly's fluffy corpse is, I believe, the greatest weight I carry on my conscience.
What I understood deeply on that day was this: to hasten eternal rules is a mortal sin.
One's duty is confidently to follow nature's everlasting rhythm.^[7]*

As I come to the end, I invite you to reflect on the famous poetic quote of Pierre Teilhard de when writing to a relative, "Above all, Trust In the Slow Work of God". I suggest we contemplate this passage but substitute some of the words, especially those referring to God. I have used the word 'Earth', but you could use Universe, Mystery or Beloved or whatever you prefer to use to refer to the Divine Presence.

*Above all, trust in the slow work of the Earth.
We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.
We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.
And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—
and that it may take a very long time.
And so I think it is with you;
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.
Only the Earth could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give her the benefit of believing
that her hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.^[8]*



As we sit in contemplation together at 4.00 pm each day, or simply bring compassionate intention to what we are doing at that time, may we continue to trust this Mystery lovingly and patiently as she embraces us and encourages us to move slowly and listen mindfully in the present, even though we may sense incompleteness. May we be attentive to the rhythms of the seasons that can engender patience within us and, despite times of anxiety or discomfort, allow us to journey in compassion with the Universe.

Tread gently, stay safe, love and live patiently.

Tim Moloney cfc

^[1] 1 Corinthians 13:4: Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant, NRSV.

^[2] Ronald Rolheiser, "Patient with God", cf.

<file:///Users/tjmoloney/Desktop/Tim/Articles/Patience%20With%20God%20%7C%20Ron%20Rolheiser.htm>

^[3] cf. <http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/deep-eco/cosmic.htm>

^[4] Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 2006), 149 (italics added).

^[5] Cf <http://thomasberry.org/publications-and-media/earths-desire>

^[6] Thomas Berry, poem: "An Appalachian Wedding", cf <http://thomasberry.org/publications-and-media/an-appalachian-wedding>

^[7] Nikos Kazantzakis, "*Zorba the Greek*" (Simon & Schuster; Revised ed. 2014), page 142, quoted on the website - <https://www.philipchircop.com/post/148562491062/zorba-the-greek-patience-and-butterflies-i-found>

^[8] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ excerpted from [Hearts on Fire](#) <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/prayer-of-theilhard-de-chardin/>