

DAILY BREAD

“Grain of Hope : Slice of Heaven”

Radical Sabbath

Restoring Sabbath

a claiming
of stars as our kin, a recognition
of plants and animals as lost family;

a cell of quiet resistance; a shedding
of the ‘advanced’ man’s burden; a rushing out
to play with the astonished eyes of a child
seeing for the first time;

A sip of water
in our fevered work-desert, a spring
which gathers force to a river irrigating,
restoring the land;

certainly not a Sunday
turned to a duty-day, to an extension
of the week of sober work;

not a six-day making
of a once-and-for-all world
parcelled out
in creation-days, in evolution-stages:

all far too slow
for this seething, collapsing earth, this force field
of interactions

where rotted wheat-stems
feed their own seed-descendants; where hyphae
become the root into which they twist; where sea
travels high in clouds, and suddenly plummets
to earth-shock; and then the floppy drops
capillary through green, thin to ribbed blue
and petal into bells.

a world-being-made
as it dissolves itself, a co-creation
so busily at work that in response
Sabbath must turn to an act of attention
habitual as breath.

Yet sometimes we seem to stand helpless
as if at the helm of a huge tanker, watching
the seep of oil devour the threshing waves,
by the yard, by the mile, and we reach out our arms
to the disappearing blue, out towards bird
and fish and floating green, all being strangled
by glutinous death, and we are left stranded
in the middle of a black wasteland, trapped
inside our own machine.

If we are not to despair,
Sabbath must be marked by a radical sorrow
which impels us to act;

it must become
an overturning of the brain-eye axis
set at lordly height;

an unleashing
of the imagination, peopling the air
with invisible spores, burrowing
through muck with earthworms, tracing the unseen
networks deep in the soil:

Sabbath must become the realisation
that the earth which we inhabit and destroy
inhabits each of us. The earth is a miracle
in plain sight.

Diane Pacitti, 2020

“ Then God blessed the seventh day and
made it holy, because on it he rested from
all the work of creating that he had
done...”

Genesis 2 v 3

A sabbath for agriculture in right relation with the natural world

The living world really is very good, beautiful and innately functional. It draws forth wonderment and praise – blessing – from Homo sapiens, the species able to both exercise and reflect on these capacities. To wonder and bless, requires us to pause and contemplate. The first thing God does when there is finally a moment to rest is to bless the day precisely because it is one of rest. Rest is required in order to contemplate and bless restfulness, and so renewal is embedded at the very beginning of things.

An orientation of contemplation and blessing soon presents us with the realisation that we are woven inextricably into this temple of the cosmos, that what happens here happens to all of us. The first book of revelation, the cosmos itself, speaks to us directly through our senses, emotions, imagination and reason. News of belonging and home appears at every turn. In the words of Mary Oliver, often quoted in the SJP community:

*“Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting --
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.”*

Contemplation makes visible aeons-long indigenous wisdom, where land is not separate from story, lore is not separate from law, and sustainable food production is sacred. Contemplation of the depths and heights of the cosmos and the irrevocable bonds of relationship between things revealed by science invites us to think again, turn again.

Poets and prophets in every culture and community and generation stop and look again, standing in the middle of the river and changing the flow of understanding around them. The counter-(agri)culturalists who bless us with a different vision, who see the whole, who understand that if you tug on anything in nature you are bound to find it attached to everything else. The foragers, organic farmers, rewilders, permaculturalists, no-diggers, bio-mimics, regenerative farmers, companion planters, allotmenters, crop rotators, integrated pest management practitioners and co-operators with the wood-wide-web of fungal connection. All these lovers of the earth invite us to reimagine the world, not as resource-bank or playground, but as sacred terrain.

To watch, wait, listen, cooperate is in the nature of blessing.

All is in fact very good already.



The Seventh Day
(monotype)
Antonio Pacitti