

Last Sunday, after church, I went to the PAC at Cal Poly for the very first time. It was the SLO Master Chorale's Fall concert – it was *really* good. One of the pieces performed was a musical setting of The Canticle of the Sun, a prayer of praise to God, written by St. Francis of Assisi in the year 1224. In it, Francis praises God through the various elements of Creation, elements of Creation he names as *kin*: Brother Wind and Air, Mother Earth, Brother Sun, Sister Water. Called out as kin, as family, you can sense in this canticle, this song of praise, that Francis felt embedded in creation, was grateful for it, felt part of it, you can feel his sense of intimacy with the rest of Creation by his naming the familial bond, his gratitude for all the ways that all of Creation supports and allows his being. Implicit in his words, is the knowing that his life is because of what his 'family in Creation,' these wonders of God, have enabled him to be.

The next day, Monday, was my Sabbath, and, partly inspired by the night before, wanting to be out in Creation myself, I took myself off to my favorite trail, the Point Buchon trail in Montaña de Oro. It's achingly beautiful there, and it was a spectacular day. I started off down the trail ... and was stopped short by a sign I saw posted along the way: stay on the trail, it said, protect this natural resource.

Resource. The word just jumped out at me. I hit the trail thinking of St Francis' song of love and praise for God, through a Created world he experienced as kin, and here, the land all around me was named: resource. 'Resource' feels about as far away from family as you can get when naming something. One of the formal definitions the internet offered up for 'resource' was: a stock or supply of an asset that can be drawn on by a person or organization in order to function effectively.

St. Francis, I'm pretty sure, would have been baffled by this chosen name for the natural world.

The way we use language, the words in our vernacular, the names we give things, reveals a lot about our worldview. That we, in this society, name the land, the air, the waterways as 'resource' absolutely reflects and influences the way we think about all the elements of Creation, and our relationship to them. We do the same thing with people, by the way, we have departments of 'human resources' in our organizations.

Ours is not an intimate, familial, mutually supporting relationship with the rest of Creation, with our neighbor.

Far from it.

Because the way we use language, the words in our vernacular, the names we give things does matter, I think we should consider naming the worldview that shapes us and influences our thinking. I think it's actually pretty accurate to name the worldview of this society, based on the way it has us understand the world around us, based on the way it has us frame and name Creation, I think it's fitting to name this worldview: tyrannical. Tyrannical, because it's a worldview that normalizes exploitation, use of Creation, including people; tyrannical because this worldview is fueled by self-interest, self-interest that always comes before justice; tyrannical because this worldview normalizes claiming power and control over. It's a tyrannical worldview because people, plants, animals, fungi, the air, the water, the land, none of it has the right to flourish; within a tyrannical worldview, most of Creation has no right to life. This world and all that is in it isn't a wonder of God's magnificent Creation, but a resource.

Much as we'd like to blame the current state of affairs on this government or that, it's more likely, I think, that the tyrannical worldview today carries far more responsibility for the state we're in. And it's nothing new in the Western World; all its Empires and colonizing enterprises have depended on a tyrannical worldview. Without it land theft and genocide wouldn't be possible. Without it, how could we possibly poison our air and our water, strip and eviscerate our landscapes, collapse entire ecosystems, wipe out thousands of species, or normalize the horrendous living conditions imposed on the vast majority of the world's population. Tyranny sees the death and destruction it causes, tyranny sees the harms it does, but embedded in a worldview, embedded within the beings and doings of millions of people, well, *there's just no way around it*, suffering, death and destruction, *they're just an unavoidable consequence* of being able to live the kind of life we believe we should be living.

Throughout history, our ancestors in the faith have yearned for a Messiah, a Messiah that will finish off the Tyrants of this world once and for all, because, surely, it's the Tyrants, the very bad Kings, the folks in charge that are the root of all that's wrong. And yet, time and again, God points out we are the ones who must change, it's we, collectively, that create the ecosystem for Tyranny. It isn't just the folks in charge that need to be held accountable, and knocked off their thrones, we have responsibility in and for this; we need to acknowledge that we need to get free, free from the tyranny we've enthroned 'in here' if we're to know true fullness of life, and participate in the healing of the world.

Our deliverance, our salvation, our liberation from this tyranny is possible – Jesus came, in great and ridiculous humility, uncompromising humility, to show us the Way, and to render tyranny in all its forms powerless and absurd, to render a life lived for self-interest alone, in all its forms, an expression of sin and absurd.

Jesus, The Christ, the one we await yet again as we enter into the Advent season, Jesus offers us deliverance, salvation, freedom, not from regimes or governments or from the tyranny of any earthly ruler or system, but first, from the tyranny that enslaves us: the tyranny we've internalized, in all its forms, the tyranny that drives so many of our choices and actions in the world ... that has our own self-interest as ultimate. This internalized tyranny, is given shape and form today by our worldview. This, today, is what stands between us and our being restored into the fullness of our life-giving relationship with God, one another, and all of Creation. This is what stops us, today, from seeing the rest of Creation as kin, kin to be cherished, and loved.

This world and the people we share it with are not our resource; we are, in fact and truth, "one," part of an indivisible God-Created whole. Our own flourishing absolutely depends on the flourishing of all the world around us; our life, on the life, the existence of all that's around us, the health, the flourishing, and the continued existence of all of Creation; Sister Water, Mother Earth, Brother Air all included.

Advent is a season for us to wake up, wake up to truth, to this truth, to reframe and then rename the world around us and all of Creation so we're ready for the promise of God's Kingdom, ready to live into it, to give it our life.

Advent is a season for us to wake up to the truth of our shared life as a part of God's magnificent Creation, wake up to what we're doing with this life today, our complicity in "the works of darkness," in tyranny, be really aware of what we expect from this life, wake up, be ready ... Because the Incarnation that's to come teaches us, definitively, it doesn't have to be this way.