

(1)

Intro: Say. After the events of this week I was tempted to ask 'Why don't we have a 'fire god'? People used to worship fire for its power. Why don't we offer sacrifices to keep the 'fire God happy and in a place other than here! Certainly, there is great demonstration of power, which will determine our reality from now on. Or maybe we could broaden out the question and say 'Why don't we have a 'nature god'? Why don't we say that 'nature' is the determining force behind our reality and we must respect and worship 'mother nature.'

Christians say though that nature is not holy, and that greater than the power of nature, or behind the power of nature, which is indifferent to human kind lies another power. The one, true God who created the powers of nature The Church Father, Tertullian very early on wrote

And being persuaded that the sun himself, and moon, and stars pray to the Supreme God through His only-begotten Son, we judge it improper to pray to those beings who themselves offer up prayers (to God), seeing even they themselves would prefer that we should send up our requests to the God to whom they pray, rather than send them downwards to themselves

(2)

This God is not indifferent to us as 'nature' is, but more than that, God's power operates in a different way from the simple exercise of force. Nature is indifferent to us Nature rewards 'the fittest' We say 'It's a jungle out there' when we want to talk about a very harsh world. Nature herself is in need of redemption.

But our God, exercises power not by survival of the fittest, or by destroying enemies, but by love. God's way is to hold, embrace and by that holding and embracing to transform in love what is 'not God' or what is opposed to God

look at today's reading. Jesus deals with the debilitating and shameful 'natural' disease of leprosy through his touch and embrace. And he does this all through his ministry. This is God at work, and we see God's methods.

And on the cross, God the Father embraces and holds within himself his Son whom every one else thought was beyond redemption and was only worth torturing to death.

(3)

So when Marysville was being crucified and now lies in the tomb, God the Father is embracing and holding all that suffering, and still does, ready to transform and heal it and to raise it to a new life. That love, that embrace is the determiner of our reality. Not the fire. As the epistle to the Ephesians says 'Our life is his with Christ in God' (Show clay model.)

What is more, this week we have seen God's embracing love on the work of volunteers, and police, and emergency services, which have embraced those who have lost so much. It has begun to transform their lives. The test will come when we are asked to extend that embrace to those who later, through grief or distress will be angry or bitchy or mean. This too needs to be held and transformed.

*So: This week, we have seen the devastating power of Nature. and how she interacts with human habitation. We come here in this Eucharist to affirm and worship that more powerful God shown to us in Christ. **Amen.***