

JPIC 74 - APRIL 2018

*Health in the Lord and the Blessing of the Holy Spirit (Rule of Saint Albert)*  
*Saudavel iha Maromak no grasa Spirtu Santo Nian (Regula Sto Alberto)*

## The *EarthSong* Library comes to the Carmelite Library

a reflection by Philip Harvey

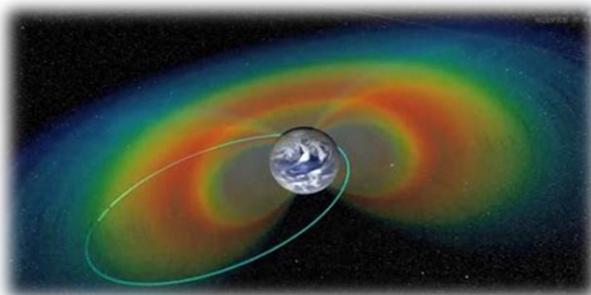
At the end of last year the *EarthSong* Project closed after a journey of nearly fifteen years. One outcome of this decision was the donation of the *EarthSong* Library to the Carmelite Library. This means that the Library, in one week, became the best ecospirituality library in Melbourne. This is a great gift, it's also a great responsibility, a great potential learning experience.

As its website explains, "EarthSong Educational Project emerged in 2003 from a conversation amongst members of several Religious Congregations wanting to explore the nature and power of the new universe story and its implications for an integral spirituality. The project was launched at Pipemakers Park on the banks of the Maribyrnong River on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2003. In 2008 *EarthSong: Earth Literacy and Earth Ethics Association* became an incorporated body, governed by the EarthSong Council. In keeping with EarthSong's vision seminars, workshops, retreats and programs for adults and senior students [...] comprised the main focus of its activity. Since 2004, the *EarthSong Journal* offered Australian reflections on issues of ecology, spirituality and education."



EarthSong's sponsors were Brigidine Sisters Victoria, Christian Brothers Oceania Province, Faithful Companions of Jesus, Institute of Sisters of Mercy Australia and Papua New Guinea, Presentation Sisters Victoria, and the Passionist Congregation. Later Anne Boyd csb, one of EarthSong's Project Coordinators, established an Ecospirituality Reading Group at the Carmelite Centre in Middle Park, a group that continues to meet and share knowledge, a group to which all are welcome.

The library of *EarthSong* expresses the many interweaving interests of its original mission. If our concern is for the future of the planet and our place in that future, then these are not minority matters. We are each called to think differently about our living environment, to learn about the



NASA's twin [Radiation Belt Storm Probes](#) (RBSP) took a musical interlude and listened to the Earth singing to itself in the form of radio waves

changing knowledge we have of the big picture of the Universe, right through to the most local and intimate networks of interrelated being.

So there are many books on that most ancient of disciplines, Cosmology, its history and theology, brought up to the present in which we analyse and synthesise the discoveries and theories of science. Science and religion are no longer contending opposites in some unholy battle for a correct view, but elements of the same human desire to know and understand. Brian Swimme, Mary Evelyn Tucker and Brian Ferris rub elbows with Bill Plotkin, Steven Chase, and John Haught.

**Hence also the broad ranging literature on Darwinism and all that followed. Most Christians today accept the theory of evolution.** The question for some time has been how to appreciate the changing positions on evolution in the light of Scripture and Tradition; how to conduct a constructive dialogue about its reality. EarthSong library contains dozens of authors and thinkers working in the field. Historically significant amongst these is the French Jesuit mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, whose observable recent rehabilitation within the Catholic Church comes at this time of cosmological and environmental dialogue. The related events are apparent every day in the papers, how to think and address the presenting issue for our world of ecological crisis, a crisis regarded by many as a First Order issue, given that it threatens what we know of the created world.



**Pope Francis' encyclical 'Laudato Si'**, with its emphatic Franciscan title, is one of the major world documents in response to the "inconvenient truth" of climate change and ecological degradation. The EarthSong Project predates this encyclical but its library helps explain where the Pope is coming from and how to read and respond to his words.



Attendant upon this teaching is the general and worldwide activism, as distinct from do-nothingness, that serves to protect and restore the Earth and the sanctity of Creation. This understandably takes political and social forms, as well as theological and philosophical forms. The collection also contains important works on ecology from all the major faith traditions.

**The Carmelite Centre's 2016 Symposium** on these questions introduced many attendees to the rich and varied thinking at the heart of ecotheology and ecospirituality. The EarthSong library is well represented, its holdings augmenting what was already a strong author presence in this Library: Thomas Mary Berry, Wendell Berry, Denis Edwards, Charles Eisenstein, Andy Fisher, Matthew Fox, John Grim, Joanna Macy, Sean McDonagh, Bron Miller, Diarmuid O'Murchu, H. Paul Santmire, and the list grows.

**The slogan 'think globally, act locally' is a rule of thumb for ecospirituality.** We are going to begin where we find ourselves, which is frequently in our own backyard. The library contains many books on Australian environment, whether fauna, flora, geology, or climate. The Carmelite Library collects materials on local history and geography, so there have been many adds on the life (in every sense of the word) of Melbourne and that large expanse of water just down the street, Port Phillip Bay. Any books on local Indigenous culture, history, and religion are added as a matter of course. Aboriginal spirituality is a constant commitment in the Library's collection development.

**Related to this is Australian nature writing**, much of which speaks of the intimate connections we have with our own environment. EarthSong collected widely in this genre, for example Geoff Lacey, Patrice Newell, Mark Tredinnick, Geoff Lacey, and Tim Winton. Some people regard the American Henry David Thoreau as a formative spiritual writer on nature and we have a very good Thoreau section, now further improved courtesy of EarthSong. But Thoreau is only one style of nature writer. Today the landscape is populated



with writers putting down their words on the effect and condition of their natural world s. The spiritual life is enriched by the beauty and experience, but also the brutal honesty at times, of this genre.

**Another philosophy that turned into a slogan is E.F. Schumacher's 'small is beautiful'.** Schumacher is one of several thinkers whose ideas have inspired movements and even schools of followers; such thinkers, not all of them instantly identifiable as religious thinkers, have had a major influence on ecospirituality. Writers in the widespread Sustainable movement are another example, including the Tasmanian Bill Mollison, one of the conceptual founders of permaculture.

*The EarthSong library is a prized windfall for the Carmelite Library. It is a grand acquisition. The materials are being steadily catalogued and added to the collection, but it is you the reader of this report who is the future reader of these works and for whom they are being made available. The windfall is also a developing research resource for the University of Divinity, which this Library serves.*

## FOR YOUR CALENDAR - APRIL

**4 April** - International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

**4 April** - 50th anniversary of assassination of Martin Luther King Jr in the USA

**6 April** - International Day of Sport for Development and Peace

**11 April** - 1963 Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth)

**22 April** - **International Mother Earth Day**

**24 April** - 1945 Opening of First United National Conference with 45 nations attending

**25 April** - ANZAC Day

**29 April** - Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare



Since its inception in 1970, **EARTH DAY** has become a global event to raise ecological awareness, to take personal and community action to reverse the harmful affects we are causing to the delicate balance of the environment on our planet. <https://www.earthday.org/campaigns/plastics-campaign/>

**Global Catholic Climate Covenant** are amongst many organisations raising awareness to combat **PLASTIC POLLUTION**, particularly the damage this is causing in our oceans. <http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/>

**YOUR ACTION:** Be informed, find out what is your community doing to reduce plastic pollution. How can each of us reduce our use of plastic?

<http://environment.gov.au/marine/marine-pollution/marine-debris>

*Earth teach me!*

*Earth teach me patience as the plants grow slowly*

*Earth teach me hope as the plants grow slowly*

*Earth teach me hope*

*as the first green shoots break through*

*Earth teach me courage*

*as the wild animals protect their young*

*Earth teach me blessing as the sun rises each day*

*Earth teach me loving kindness*

*as the birds migrate for winter*

*Earth teach me freedom as the birds who fly alone*

*Earth teach me celebration as the apples come to full fruit*

*Earth teach me yearning as the rain nourishes the drought.*

*Earth teach me! (Source Unknown)*

*Humans are new here. Above us, the galaxies dance out towards infinity. Under our feet is ancient earth. We are beautifully moulded from this clay. Yet the smallest stone is millions of years older than us. In your thoughts, the silent universe seeks echo.*

*John O'Donohue*