

29th October 2021

Integrity

“I made the earth and created [humans] on it. I stretched out the heavens with my own hands. For this is what Jehovah says, the Creator of the heavens, the true God, the One who formed the earth, its Maker who firmly established it, who did not create it simply for nothing, but formed it to be inhabited: ‘I am Jehovah, and there is no one else.’”

Bible, Isaiah 45: 12, 18

I was watching Rick Stein, a well-known UK TV chef, on a random Saturday morning cookery show. He was on one of his “jaunts”, this time in Spain, and was interviewing two young chefs who run a popular and well-frequented Tapas Bar in a small village. At the end of the piece, Stein was cooking Razor Clams, using the same methods he’d seen the chefs use. He was his usual enthusiastic and ebullient self. “Simple ingredients, fresh from the market, cooked as simply as possible with the minimum of embellishment,” he intoned. And he added, “What’s the point of taking something made by God and mucking it up.”

The expression “mucking it up” is one I’ve known since childhood. You take something simple, or you do something that should be easy, and you make a mess of it. You “muck it up” when it should be straightforward.

In the Iona Community, one of our common concerns relates to “the integrity of creation”. One dictionary meaning of “integrity” is “whole or undivided”. So it’s the right word to use about our environment, for it speaks of things fitting together, connections, wholeness, “workability”. Should that not be on our minds as COP26 approaches?

The prophet Isaiah reminds us in the quotation above that we were given the earth by the hand of God, to appreciate and care for. It works. It hangs together. It’s all connected. It’s whole. It’s got integrity. And what are we guilty of? Mucking it up! We take what’s simple and operates perfectly well, and we misuse it, make a mess of it. *We’re* the ones who’ve been mucking it up for a long time – and continue to do so!

Our world was not created “simply for nothing”. It is something, wonderful, precious and beautiful. So, “what’s the point of taking something made by God and mucking it up?” What is the point indeed?

A prayer for today

*Forgive me, Lord, for taking what has integrity and treating it with arrogance.
Help me, with others, to put right which I’ve been responsible for mucking up. Amen*