

The cross stands still while the world turns

In the opening scene of *The Unseen*, a novel by Norwegian author Roy Jacobsen – shortlisted for the Man Booker International Prize 2017 – the local minister, Pastor Johannes Malmberget, is rowed across to a remote island called Barroy. After a difficult two-hour journey, he scrambles ashore – thankful to still be alive, teeters along the landing stage and then “catches sight of something he has never seen before, his home on the main island the way it looks from Barroy”.

This summer, we have been celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 space mission – the excitement of Neil Armstrong’s small step/giant leap on 20th July 1969 as he and Buzz Aldrin became the first human beings to land on the moon. It’s been good to remember the often-forgotten third astronaut, Michael Collins, who remained in lunar orbit and was on the far side of the moon when his colleagues took those famous steps.

All three astronauts shared one particularly special moment, the first sight of something never seen before – the earth the way it looks from the moon. When the astronauts first saw the earthrise, they were struck by how the predominant colour was not green, but blue, as two-thirds of the earth’s surface is sea (indeed, once a day almost all you can see from space is the Pacific Ocean). This was also very clear from the astonishing artwork on

display in the Cathedral recently. ‘Gaia’ by artist Luke Jerram is a seven metre diameter globe, suspended in space. It features detailed NASA imagery of the earth’s surface taken from space, and turns completely every four minutes.

When I saw it in the Cathedral, I thought it looked beautiful and fragile. It filled me with wonder and a feeling of protectiveness. I was reminded that the biggest crisis facing our nation (even more important than Brexit) is the ecological catastrophe that scientists are trying to engage us in addressing.

I was also struck by the astonishing view from the Cathedral Nave of ‘Gaia’ behind the equally beautiful hanging cross. Frank Roper’s 1975 depiction of the crucifixion is 15 feet high, weighs more than half a ton and represents Jesus’ suffering and his watching over the Cathedral. It carries the Latin inscription “Stat Crux Dum Volvitor Orbis” – “the cross stands still while the world turns”.

In this time of great uncertainty, it’s good to be still and recall that God shares our lives and watches over us.

God bless,



+John
Bishop of Brixworth

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