

# 3 The Place on which I am standing is Holy Ground

**Leader:** Check that some people have brought two oranges, a few grains of sand, a few dried peas, a sheet of paper, a tape measure, an atlas or a laptop.

**Check in**

**Grace:** I ask for a lasting change in my heart, as I contemplate our planet Earth.

**Hymn:** *For the Beauty of the Earth* (Traditional)

**Scripture:** Exodus 3: 3-6 The Burning Bush

*Moses saw that the bush was on fire but that it was not burning up. <sup>3</sup> “This is strange,” he thought. “Why isn't the bush burning up? I will go closer and see.” <sup>4</sup> When the Lord saw that Moses was coming closer, he called to him from the middle of the bush and said, “Moses! Moses!” He answered, “Yes, here I am.” <sup>5</sup> God said, “Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground. <sup>6</sup> I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” So Moses covered his face, because he was afraid to look at God.*

**Explanation:** In 1971, from the window of the Apollo 14 Command Module astronaut Edgar Mitchell beheld our Earth as a distant blue dot. His heart changed; he saw the planet as a living being, harmonious and whole. He wrote: “... Suddenly, from behind the rim of the moon, in long, slow-motion moments of immense majesty, there emerges a sparkling blue and white jewel,

*a light, delicate sky-blue sphere laced with slowly swirling veils of white, rising gradually like a small pearl in a thick sea of black mystery. It takes more than a moment to fully realize this is Earth . . . home. “*

*He stared at the “blue jewel-like home planet suspended in the velvety blackness from which we had come. What I saw out the window was all I had ever known, all I have ever loved and hated, longed for, all that I once thought had ever been and ever would be. It was there suspended in the cosmos on that fragile little sphere. I experienced a grand epiphany accompanied by exhilaration. My view of our planet was a glimpse of divinity.”*

... he came, later, to see his experience in mystical terms, as a profound meditative state called *Savikalpa Samadhi* in Sanskrit, meaning union with the divine.

**Exercise: A glimpse of the mystery of the cosmos**

On the floor of the meeting room, use these objects to set up a scale model of the solar system.

On a chair place an orange; it represents the Sun, source of all heat, energy, life, on planet Earth. One person measures out a distance of 10 m from the orange and there places the sheet of paper. At the centre of the paper, place a grain of sand. It represents our Earth. As a group, prayerfully reflect that all of evolutionary history occurred and is continuing on the surface of the grain of sand. The sand grain does not just stay in one place; it constantly circles the

orange. Jupiter, 11 times larger than Earth, is a pea seed, circling the Sun at a distance of 65 m. Imagine the location of that place in relation to your meeting room. Saturn with its wonderful rings is another pea, 130 m from the orange, and Pluto, another grain of sand, is situated 650 m from the orange (about 0.6 km).

Now, as a group become aware that the nearest star to our Sun, on the scale of our model, is about 1500 km away. Use the atlas or laptop to find a city which is that distance from where you are meeting today. The second orange represents that star and would be placed in the city you identify. So far, we have considered only our solar system; it is one of many such in the Milky Way galaxy. If we imagine our solar system shrunk to the area of a 50 cent piece, the galaxy would be the area of Australia, or the USA on the same scale. There are billions of other galaxies.

In the modern context, ponder the implications of these thoughts of these two scientists:

**Paul Davies, Physicist**

*“There is now broad agreement among physicists and cosmologists that the Universe is in several respects ‘fine-tuned’ for life”.*

He refers to the fact that certain conditions necessary for life were built into the Big Bang from the very beginning; for example, the Strong Force which binds protons and neutrons together.

Humans may not be at the physical centre of the universe, but we appear to be at the centre of its purpose.

**Freeman Dyson, Physicist**

*“The more I examine the universe and study the details of its architecture, the more evidence I find that the universe in some sense must have known we were coming”*

**Prayer and sharing:** Reflect briefly on the wonder of this reality: Our Earth seems so insignificant and lonely, yet Almighty God longed so deeply to live among us that He chose to be born into a family, in a crib among the cattle! Reflect in silence for a few minutes, then each one can share what has touched them in this session.

**Closing Prayer** Together, in silence, use the Third Method of Prayer. This is as follows:

“With each breath or respiration, one should pray mentally while saying a single word of the *Our Father*, or other prayer that is being recited, in such a way that from one breath to another a single word is said. For this same space of time, the attention is chiefly directed to the meaning of the word, to the person who is addressed, to our own lowliness, or the difference between the greatness of the person and our own littleness. In this way, observing the same measure of time, he (or she) should go through the other words of the *Our Father*.”  
(*Spiritual Exercises* #258, Puhl translation).

**Check out**