

# What is sacred to us?

## Misereor Lenten Veil 2023/2024



Misereor Lenten Veil 2023 „What is sacred to us?“ by Emeka Udemba © Misereor

**‘We live on a blue planet that revolves around a ball of fire with a moon that moves the seas and you don’t believe in miracles?’ rapper Marteria praises our universe. The colourful Lenten Veil by artist Emeka Udemba tells of the beauty of the “blue miracle”, but also of its destruction.**

Climate change, wars, pandemics – the major crises of our time reinforce and overlap each other. This poses particular challenges for us. Even if these problems are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, climate change ultimately has the greatest impact on our survival. The survival of every person, every animal and every plant. Our planet is melting, burning, flooding, silting up, people die due to floods and excessive heat.

**A world torn into pieces:** This scenario is reflected in the current Misereor Lenten Veil, a collage of many pieces of torn newspaper. News, information, facts and fakes – layer by layer the artist tears the newspapers into small pieces, glues them together and makes them into something new. From afar, the earth on the Lenten Veil sparkles like a jewel in turquoise green and blue. Four arms reach into the warm, red space surrounding the earth: judging by their shape and colour, the arms belong to people of different gender and ethnic origin. Together, their hands gently touch the globe, but also give it room to move. Truly a torn world, wounded and fragile. Is it still protected or has it already been abandoned? Does it move? Will it tilt like our climate?

**Moments of decision:** Biblically speaking, God entrusts creation to us (Genesis 1 and 2). Creation is both a *gift* and a *task*. It is a gift for which we have been given responsibility. We hold it in our hands as the image of God. Creation is a process that never ends. The making of creation cannot be completed within six days and neither can the story of creation be told within six days. On the contrary: the story of creation is at a crucial point right now.

**Show our colours:** "This is the price of the world" we read on one of the pieces of newspaper. The true price of goods is higher than what we pay at the supermarket checkout. That is why Misereor is asking the following questions with this Lenten Veil:

What is sacred to us?  
What will we not touch?  
What is life worth to us?

Do we still hear God's voice speaking in our fellow creatures? The encyclical *Laudato Si'* sees a definite connection between the external deserts that grow because our inner emptiness is spreading (*Laudato Si'*, 217). How can we make a contribution so that our world remains *intact* and we once again respect the *sacred*, which is not available and cannot be priced?

It is in our hands: Among the many news in a pile of pieces of torn old newspaper are some that are encouraging: "New beginning", "From the beginning", "Women, heroine, knowledge" or "Where people feel comfortable", that make us want to "embrace life" and "show our colours". Emeka Udemba sticks these news on the wounds of creation like colourful, comforting plasters. We need people who have an appetite for these kind of changes. People who take responsibility because we are the first generation to see the full extent of the crisis and the last that will be able to stop it. Thus, the Lenten Veil is an invitation to intervene, an invitation to be part of the ongoing story of creation. As long as there are people that launch such courageous initiatives, the hope for a new, just earth will always be alive.

It is in our hands!

*Dr. Claudia Kolletzki, Misereor*

## **Interview with Emeka Udemba**

### **The Lenten Veil was made using paper. Why?**

I mainly work with paper. I cover the entire surface of the canvas with newspapers and sketch the motives onto them. On top of that, I add a black layer which forms the basis of my picture. Then I create the figures with coloured pieces of paper. Onto each layer of coloured paper, I add a further layer of torn newspaper pieces. This is how I work, layer by layer. In this way, a structure forms on the surface of the picture which becomes part of my work. For me, the information we are all exposed to has a lot of power over us. Therefore, I use a lot of printed material from newspapers and magazines for my pictures. My work talks about how our thinking is influenced by what we read and see.

### **What was your inspiration for this picture?**

God created this world and gave it to us to take care of it. We have the right to take what we need to survive. However, today we are consuming too much. The result is that the planet is getting warmer by the day. There are massive floods, also in Germany, and pandemics are on the rise. We only have this world, and if we don't treat it well, it will take its revenge.

### **What kind of communication about the Lenten Veil would you like to see?**

A work of art is only complete when you learn about the reactions of the people who look at it. I wish that this Lenten Veil can be the starting point of a journey in which we change our perspectives and rethink our way of life. I am convinced that we can find new ways of living our lives.

*(Extract from the workbook)*

# Or can it?

Why are people always so pessimistic? –  
it isn't as bad as it seems  
Until now, spring has come back every year  
and temperatures have always been high –  
it isn't as bad as it seems  
Nature recovers on its own  
Otherwise experts will fix the situation  
And last but not least, there is also God  
The situation won't be that bad  
and there have always been storms –  
it isn't as bad as it seems  
After all, the earth cannot fall down.  
It can't!

Or can it?

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