

Friends

If you, like my family, have been watching with interest the journey of Artemis and her crew to travel to the dark side of the moon on the longest ever space journey made by a manned spacecraft, then you will also be interested to know that Sunday the 12th of April is the International Day of Human Space Flight. It was first declared as such in 2011 at the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly and the date was chosen to mark the first crewed space flight made on the 12th of April 1961 by the 27-year-old Russian Cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin. Gagarin orbited the Earth for 1 hour and 48 minutes aboard the Vostok 1.

These moments remind me of the poem by the 19-year-old American Spitfire pilot John Gillespie Magee Jr, “High Flight.”

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, — and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of — wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air . . .

Up, up the long, delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or ever eagle flew —
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

It is a poem that has often brought me peace as I too seek to “put out my hand and touch the face of God” if not through flight of aircraft, then certainly through theological exploration and on wings of prayer. I hope that it may bring you peace or inspiration as is your need on this first Sunday after Easter.

God bless, Vicci