

Celebration of Earth and Our Home.

Opening thought:

“We might think of a viable future for the planet less as the result of some scientific insight or as dependent on some socio- economic arrangement than as participation in a symphony or as a renewed presence to the vast cosmic liturgy” (Berry, *The Great Work*, 20)...“The fulfillment of the Earth community is to be caught up in the grandeur of existence itself and in admiration of those mysterious powers whence all this has emerged” (Berry, *The Great Work*, xi) This is a single orchestration happening all at once.

This is not a knowing of the universe, this is the universe happening in us, through us, about us, inscending upon us. (inscending is a word crafted by Thomas to convey this idea).

Coming together exercise:

Pachamama is a word in the Quechua (*Ke-chwa*) language of the Andes that includes the sacred presence of (*the*) *Earth, the sky, the universe, and all time.*

Standing in Pachamama, the sacred presence of Earth, the universe and all time, you are more than your name and what you have been doing up to now. You are a unique being. There is no one who has had your particular history, your particular interests and loves.

In a moment, I am going to ask you to share yourself in a particular way to others in this room. We have _____ minutes, and in that time, circulate to as many people as possible, sharing by completing this sentence:

I am a unique being and some things I love about Earth are.....
(put sentence on the chalkboard or flipchart)

(ie, I am a unique being and some things I love about Earth is the incredible diversity and richness of lifeforms.

We will ring the bell when it is time to move back to your seats. Does everyone understand the instructions? The sentence is “I am a unique being and some things I love about Earth are.....you can change how you fill in the blank as often as you like.

Song:

Sing a Gentle Love Song – simple melody and lyrics by Kathy Sherman, CSJ
(sung 3 times)

Sing a gentle love song, sing to Earth,
Fill the air with music for her healing;
Then be still and you will hear her love song
Forever sung to you.

Reading

Thomas Berry's 3 primary observations of Earth:

Thomas Berry was a cultural historian. Brian Swimme, a mathematical cosmologist, says that Thomas Berry's essays "are like the invention of the eye with which to see the Earth." Miriam McGillis of Genesis Farms calls it "the unfurnished eye."

1) Earth is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. A major fundamental unexamined assumption our modern culture has been based on is the model of a mechanistic universe which can be broken down into parts. We have lost sight of the importance of seeing the interconnectedness of our life with the life of all other beings. A forest is not a resource – it is the home of magnificent beings that interact with us in ways not captured in our current economic system.

2) Earth is primary, the human is derivative. We have designed all our institutions - health care, education, work, social services, agriculture, etc. on the idea that our activities come first, and the earth exists simply to exploit for our purposes. We have not realized that we co-evolved with all other forms of life, and that maturity demands that we become less human-centric and more able to place our needs (which are valid) within the needs of the whole of life. We have been like toddlers, greedily grasping and crying, "Mine!".

3) Nothing is itself without everything else. "To tell the story of anything, we first must tell the story of everything." Thomas Berry says, "We will be alienated from the universe until we have a story, an adequate story of the universe that tells the story of the human as well as the story of everything else, because it is part of one single process that has been going through a sequence of transformative episodes."

Video:

The Story of the Universe, excerpts of a film by Neal Rogin. 7:58 minutes long

Narrative:

NARRATOR:

One way to describe our collective worldview and the unexamined assumptions that comprise it would be to call it our story.

Anthropologists tell us that a culture's story about how the Universe came to be created and how the human community came to be a part of the Universe is really the background for everything else the culture believes—their values, ethics, laws, institutions. Everything.

NARRATOR:

A new cultural story, supported by scientific discoveries, is emerging at this time in history. It's a story that says we are not separate; that everything—all of humanity, all of creation, all of the universe—is profoundly connected at both the macro and micro level.

Children today are being raised within this new “operating system,” and with it they are beginning to shape the consciousness on our planet.

NARRATOR:

One way of telling this story comes from cultural historian Thomas Berry and mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme who wrote a book called *The Universe Story*. Here is an excerpt from a film by Neal Rogin about this new way of seeing the world.

TEXT GRAPHIC:

To tell the story of anything, You have to tell the story of Everything.

-Thomas Berry

THOMAS BERRY:

We will be alienated from the universe until we have a story, an adequate story of the universe that tells the story of the human as well as the story of everything else, because it is part of one single process that has been going through a sequence of transformative episodes.

MIRIAM MACGILLIS:

This idea of an emergent universe is very, very new. There is no culture, no tradition, no sage, no prophet that could know that the way our generation is blessed to know it.

MARY EVELYN TUCKER:

When we begin to realize this tremendous sense of time that's orienting us and space that's grounding us, we are energized in a new way to take responsibility for the planet and its ecosystems. In other words, our response to the magnificence of cosmology and this story is a responsibility to its continuity.

BRIAN SWIMME:

The *Universe Story* shows how profoundly related we are...It shows that we are involved with each other and have been for a long time. So, it is not the case that the Earth was assembled and then we were added to the Earth, and it was there for our purposes. Rather, we came out of the Earth.

MATTHEW FOX:

Now the recovery of cosmology brings back a sense of community, or it ought to. To rediscover that we are kin with all other beings. And if you run the film of the universe backward 14 billion years, you realize we all descend from an original pin prick smaller than a zygote. It's really one being here. We're all relatives.

NARRATOR:

Imagine nothing. Not Space. Not darkness. Not even a vast emptiness. But nothing. Now, imagine ...everything! In a stupendous explosion of light, heat and energy, radiating out in every direction, the Universe erupted into existence 13.7 billion years ago.

DREW DELLINGER:

We can see that everything that ever was, is or will be, was compressed into a space smaller than a seed, tinier than a tear, more miniscule than a molecule. All space, all time, and the potential for everything that would ever exist started as a single point. So in a very real sense science has

discovered what indigenous people have known all along: we are all one; we are all connected; we all come from the very same source.

NARRATOR:

This massive fireball continued expanding, eventually cooling enough for the very first atoms to form.

BRIAN SWIMME:

If the expansion had just been a little bit slower, the universe would have collapsed into an enormous black hole. Or if the expansion had just been a little bit faster the universe would have expanded just too fast for the galaxies to form and so we'd have simply dust. If you altered the expansion just 1 millionth of 1% the entire universe would collapse. So what it suggests is that there is a profound wisdom at work in the universe.

MIRIAM MACGILLIS:

Earth as we see her now, has arrived at such a complexity, such a development, such a journey of that original fireball, that she is now alive in her own right. In other words, the universe, in earth, has reached a complexity in which universe awakens into life and is alive.

DREW DELLINGER:

Think about it. Everything we see around us has developed from the boiling cauldron of the early earth, a sphere of lava that miraculously gave rise to the sea and the atmosphere, and then life in its infinite expressions. As Brian Swimme says, "The earth was once molten rock and now sings operas," So all creativity and all consciousness arises, in some mysterious way, from the depths of the Earth itself.

MIRIAM MACGILLIS:

Why out of stardust has this come to be? Why birdsong? Why green? Why the lushness of palm and the stability of cypress, and the grandeur of the mountains? And why the oceans with their billions of teeming life forms? We are part of a journey so much more than we ever could even imagine.

BRIAN SWIMME:

As we move into this understanding, we have a new identity of ourselves as cosmological beings. We're not just Americans, we're not just French, we're not just Democrats. We're not any small category. We are the universe in the form of a human. And it is true of everyone. It's an amazing new understanding of ourselves that is so profoundly inclusive and everyone is part of this. Everything is part of this, and we discover as well a profound kinship. That no matter what being we're talking about on the planet, we are related. We are related in terms of energy. We're related in terms of genetics. We're all in one way or another like a form of kin and that just – It's overwhelming. So it's just now coming into human awareness. It's going to take a lot of reflection to embody this fully, but it is a massive change... in human consciousness.

Discussion

Reading – If we recognize we are the universe in human form, that we ARE the Earth, and place Earth's actions as primary, what next?

Thomas Berry's Bill of Rights for the Planet Earth

1. Rights originate where existence originates. That which determines existence determines rights.
2. Since it has no further context of existence in the phenomenal order, the universe is self-referent in its being and self-normative in its activities. It is also the primary referent in the being and activities of all derivative modes of being.

3. The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. As subjects, the component members of the universe are capable of having rights.
4. The natural world on the planet Earth gets its rights from the same source that humans get their rights, from the universe that brought them into being.
5. Every component of the Earth community has three rights. The right to be, the right to habitat, and the right to fulfill its role in the ever-renewing process of the Earth community.
6. All rights are species specific and limited. Rivers have river rights. Birds have bird rights. Insects have insect rights. Humans have human rights. Difference of rights is qualitative not quantitative. The rights of an insect would be of no use to a tree or fish.
7. Human rights do not cancel out the rights of other modes of being to exist in their natural state. Human property rights are not absolute. Property rights are simply a special relationship between a particular human "owner" and a particular piece of "property" *for the benefit of both*.
8. Species exist in the form of individuals and groupings--flock, herds, schools of fish and so forth. Rights refer to individuals and groupings, not simply in a general way to species.
9. These rights as presented here establish the relationships that the various components of the Earth have toward each other. The planet earth is a single community bound together with interdependent relationships. Every component of the Earth community is immediately or mediately dependent on every other member of the Community for the nourishment and assistance it needs for its own survival. This mutual nourishment, which includes predator-prey relationship, is integral with the role that each component of the Earth has within the comprehensive community of existence.
10. In a special manner humans have not only a need for but a right of access to the natural world, not only to supply their physical needs but also to provide the wonder needed by human intelligence, the beauty needed by human imagination, and the intimacy needed by the human emotions.

Discussion. Consider <http://therightsofnature.org/>



A worldwide movement
 creating human communities that
 respect and defend the rights of Nature.

Its time has come!

Ecuador was the first country to give rights to nature in their written constitution in 2008.

Song at the Center, by Marty Haugen

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOppUH7fCU4>

Refrain:

From the corners of creation to the center where we stand,
Let all things be blessed and holy, all is fashioned by your hand;
Brother wind and sister water, mother earth and father sky,
Sacred plants and sacred creatures, sacred people of the land.

Verse 1:

In the east, the place of dawning, there is beauty in the morn,
Here the seeker finds new visions as each sacred day is born;
All who honor life around them, all who honor life within,
They shall shine with light and glory when the morning breaks again.

Verse 2:

In the south, the place of growing, there is wisdom in the earth,
Both the painful song of dying and the joyful song of birth;
As the earth gives up her life-blood so her children's hearts may beat,
We give back to her our rev'rence holy ground beneath our feet.

Verse 3:

In the north, the place of wisdom, there is holy darkness deep,
Here the silent song of myst'ry may awake you from your sleep;
Here the music still and holy sounds beneath the snow and night
In the ones who wait with patience for the coming of the light.

Verse 4:

In the west, the place of seeing, there is born a vision new
Of the servant of the servants, who proclaimed a gospel true;
Let the creatures of creation echo back creation's prayer,
Let the Spirit now breathe through us and restore the sacred there.