



Interiority, Communion and Differentiation are the three Principles of the Universe.

Last month we sent a reflection on "**Interiority**", this month we are sending a reflection on "**Communion**" and next month the final reflection on "**Differentiation**".

Hope they are of help. (From the JPIC Team)

Principles of the Universe

Communion

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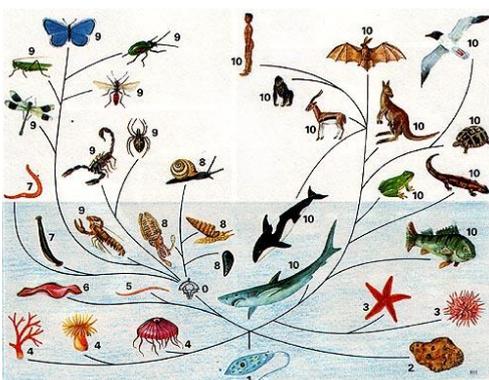
Everything in the universe is related to everything else. There are no vacuums, no islands. Everything belongs – there is no private salvation, no private undertakings. There is a universal bonding at work within the very structure of the universe itself.

The law of gravitation is the most basic expression of communion whereby every physical being is attracted to every other physical being. Eg the sun and the planets are engaged in a profound gravitational interaction all the time, like a dance. It is like a mutual attraction, an erotic draw.

There is bonding of galaxies, stars and planets with each other. On earth we have the bonding of geosystems and biosystems and ecosystems. Bonding is like a habit the universe has developed.



Every reality in the universe is intimately present to every other reality and finds its fulfilment in mutual presence. (Thomas Berry)



Without this mutual relationship nothing could ever happen in the universe-there would be no interaction. This bonding expresses itself in a particular way in the affection we humans have for each other. Erotic attraction to one person is just an expression of this wider gravitational attraction at work in the universe. What is special to us as humans is the capacity to empathise with all other beings. This is a source of ecstasy and delight. The same force that holds the stars

together in their orbit finds expression in human affection. We participate in a profound, numinous expression of love which holds everything together and at the same time respects and nurtures difference.

Ultimately there is one sacred community of life which is the universe.

Compassion is the natural outflow of communion. With compassion there is no separation between the personal and the planetary, it is woven into the whole fabric of life. Earth is coded for compassion and so are we. We live in an interconnected system. How can we become instruments of this interconnectedness? As humans we can bring our gift of conscious self awareness to the whole.



Our form as humans connects us to the mammals and the amphibians. Our form determines the tools we use, the houses we build, the sports we play etc, our form is an invention of early earth- we are 400 million years old!

We have coevolved in a fully animistic way with all species. Even our nervous system craves this full level of relationship with the natural world! Think of how you relax when you go out into the green world. We humans have come to expect one person/partner/friend/community to provide all the “otherness” we need! Is this not too brittle and too much to expect? Can we fall in love outwards with the whole of life?

However our culture tells us that other species are just objects!

Human survival depends absolutely on our capacity to live nested in relationship with all species. The challenge is to understand our place in the community of life as **one** species among species and to learn to live in a mutually enhancing way with the natural world.

All of us are made of stardust. We mirror the planet in composition- 70% water and 30% solid matter. This is true for all beings. This is a holocaust time for species through the destruction of habitats and the elimination of vast numbers of species. Human to human violence is inextricably linked to this violence. How do we navigate these waters as members of the whole community of life?

Thomas Merton says: “We are already one, but we imagine that we are not! What we have to discover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we already are.”

We modern humans are often locked into a semi autistic world- incapable of making deep or sustained contact with one another, with the outside world, the natural world and the world of the wild. We have not adequately developed our capacity for relationship and this is at the root of our planetary,



human and social disarray. We have not yet realised that in destroying the rainforests, polluting the air, water and soil we are destroying our own body. We are already sitting down to a banquet of consequences!

Through communion we participate in an already happening, ongoing event.

The greatest fulfilment is for each being to be realised in its sacred depths by every other being. This requires that we each give birth to our own true selves, that we experience the sacred presence of other beings and live in intimate communion with all. We all form part of the one community of life on this planet and we participate in the divine creative energy that can heal the whole. Earth is the only viable context for compassion and communion.

“Sacredness belongs to the whole of which we are a part and without which we do not exist. To see the world as whole is to see it as mystical. We have been shaped to see only certain words and places as sacred”. (Gregory Bateson)

What is my experience of communion with species other than humans?

What new relationship or awareness is being asked of me now?

What steps can I take in my life to become an instrument of interconnectedness?

POPE FRANCIS ON ECOLOGY - BY DONAL DORR

Pope Francis has a particular concern for the environment. On 16 March 2013, just three days after he had been elected, he told journalists that he had chosen the name of Francis of Assisi because ‘Francis was a man of poverty, who loved and protected creation.’ Three days later, during the Mass to mark his inauguration as Bishop of Rome, he linked protection of people with protection of the environment, pointing out that being a protector ‘means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world;’ and he added: ‘Everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it.’ Francis’ linking of concern for the exploited earth with concern for marginalised and exploited people has been a consistent theme of his papacy thus far.

On 5 June 2013, UN World Environment Day, Francis devoted his General Audience message to this topic. Condemning ‘consumerism’ and a ‘culture of waste,’ he called for ‘a spirit of solidarity grounded in our common responsibility for the earth and for all our brothers and sisters in the human family.’ On Easter Sunday 2013, he said, ‘let us be ... channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish.’

During his visit to Brazil in July 2013, Pope Francis met with and encouraged indigenous people from the Amazon region who have been resisting the encroachment on the forest by ranchers, farmers and agribusiness enterprises. In his address to the bishops during his time in Brazil he called for 'respect and protection of the entire creation which God has entrusted to humanity' and said that it should not be 'indiscriminately exploited but rather made into a garden.'

It may seem surprising that Francis devoted only a small section of *Evangelii Gaudium* to the topic of ecology. It may be that the pope was holding back on this topic because, as he said to visitors from Argentina in early November 2013, he intends to treat it much more comprehensively in an encyclical on the topic on which he is working.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, the pope's first reference to the topic of ecology comes when he says, 'whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenceless before the interests of a deified market'. Later in the document he says:

There are other weak and defenceless beings who are frequently at the mercy of economic interests or indiscriminate exploitation. I am speaking of creation as a whole. We human beings are not only the beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures. Thanks to our bodies, God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement. Let us not leave in our wake a swath of destruction and death which will affect our own lives and those of future generations.

Francis pointed out that we are failing in the task of stewardship: 'so often we are driven by greed and by the arrogance of dominion, possession, manipulation and exploitation; we do not preserve nature; nor do we respect it or consider it a gracious gift which we must care for and set at the service of our brothers and sisters, including future generations'.

A REMINDER: EARTH HOUR 29th March 2014 8.30 -9.30 pm

WHY JOIN IN? Because our brilliant planet needs you.

In the UK alone we're consuming three times our fair share of the planet's natural resources, and we are facing the biggest environmental challenge our generation has ever seen – climate change. It's real, it's happening now and it's affecting the things we all love, but the good news is that we can make a difference. Switching off our lights and electrical appliances with hundreds of millions of people across the world for Earth Hour shows that we're not willing to gamble with our future.



Together we can make change happen.