

Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation News

Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours



World Environment Day

"We received this world as an inheritance from past generations, but also as a loan from future generations, to whom we will have to return it!" -- Pope Francis

The UN General Assembly designated June 5 as World Environment Day in 1972 and this annual commemoration is the United Nations' principal vehicle for encouraging worldwide awareness of and action for the environment. The theme for World Environment Day 2017, 'Connecting People to Nature', invites us to get outdoors and into nature, to appreciate its beauty and its importance, and to move forward the call to protect Earth, our common home. This year's theme encourages us to think about how we are part of nature and how intimately we depend on it. It challenges us to experience and cherish this vital relationship.



Thomas Berry (1914-2009), a Passionist priest, cultural historian, self-described "geologist", prophet and mystic offers us much food for thought as we commemorate World Environment Day. His contributions to the discussion on the environment are contained in his books: *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Great Work*, *The Sacred Universe* and *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth*. Thomas Berry reminds us that "The divine communicates to us primarily through the language of the natural world. Not to hear the natural world is not to hear the divine." Allow the Divine to speak to you as you spend time in nature this month and ponder the quotes, poetry and images in this issue of JPIC News in celebration of World Environment Day.

Some thoughts from Thomas Berry...

- "...everything has a right to be recognized and revered. Trees have tree rights, insects have insect rights, rivers have river rights, and mountains have mountain rights."
- "We can no longer hear the voice of the rivers, the mountains, or the sea. The trees and meadows are no longer intimate modes of spirit presence. The world about us has become an 'it' rather than a 'thou'".
- "In our contemplation of how tragic moments of disintegration over the course of the centuries were followed by immensely creative moments of renewal, we receive our great hope for the future. To initiate and guide this next creative moment of the story of the Earth is the Great Work of the religions of the world as we move on into the future."
- "The Great Work now is to carry out the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner."

What do these quotes evoke in you?

June, 2017
Vol. 2, Number 10



June
JPIC Days of Remembrance

June 5
World Environment Day



June 8
World Oceans Day

June 12
World Day Against Child Labor

June 17
World Day to Combat
Desertification & Drought

June 20
World Refugee Day

June 21
June Solstice

What place in nature holds special significance for you?



"The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God." Pope Francis

Some call me nature.
 Others call me Mother Nature.
 I have been here for over 4 ½ billion years --
 22,500 times longer than you.
 I don't really need people but people need me.
 Your future depends on me.
 When I thrive, you thrive.
 When I falter, you falter – or worse.
 I have been here for eons.
 I have fed species greater than you;
 I have starved species greater than you.
 My oceans, my soil, my flowing streams, my forests
 They can take you or leave you.
 How you choose to live each day
 Whether you regard or disregard me
 Doesn't really matter to me one way or the other.
 Your actions will determine your fate not mine.
 I am nature. I will go on.
 I am prepared to evolve. Are you?
 Conservation International

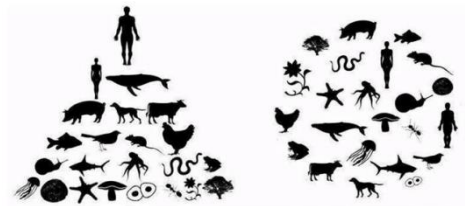
Ponder this...

"Nature is not 'our environment.' We humans are not separate from nature; we are nature, after billions of years of ongoing transformation, expressing itself now in the form which we call human on this planet Earth." (Sister Elaine Prevallet, SL)

Do you usually view humanity as part of nature or separate from nature?

Has your worldview changed over your lifetime?

How does your worldview affect how you live on Earth?



Amazing Neighbors in Service to Us..

- **Elephants** may help us to fight cancer. Researchers recently discovered that elephants have evolved a superior DNA repair mechanism to get rid of cells that have cancer-causing mutations. This could help scientists develop novel drugs to treat cancer or even prevent it from developing.
- **Frogs** act as bio-indicators, which mean they indicate the health of their ecosystems. Frog skin is very porous and permeable, allowing substances present in the environment to be absorbed within their fatty tissues. Since these amphibians have the ability to live terrestrially and aquatically, they can indicate contamination dilemmas for both habitats. Since frogs will most often be the first animals to react to biological hazards, they are helpful for warning humans to take action.
- **Birds** perform a broad variety of ecological roles, including forest decomposition, insect pest control, nutrient recycling, bio-indication of ecosystem health, and plant pollination.
- **Ants** aid in decomposition and turn up more soil than earthworms! When ants dig tunnels, they aerate the soil and recycle nutrients. This activity is ecologically crucial in maintaining healthy soil for plant (food) growth. Ants even help reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and the need for irrigation.

Source: www.onegreenplanet.org



What We Can Do Together

- Make it a spiritual practice to spend time in nature every day – or almost every day – and allow the Divine to speak to you there.
- Be intentional about nurturing a stronger connection to your neighbors of other species.
- Cultivate a garden or keep plants as companions in your home.
- Read some of Thomas Berry's works and ponder his wisdom. Let his ideas stretch you.
- Allow what you have read to move you to some action on behalf of Earth, our common home.

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