

“Embracing Creation with Reverence and Hospitality”

NAABOD Biennial Conference, July 1-6, 2011 at St. Meinrad

Notes of talk by Sr. Sheila Marie Fitzpatrick, OSB

Introduction

Intimate Relationship with Creation

Eat, Breathe, exist – we are Creation

Influenced by and influence Creation -- Elizabeth Rausch, GOES Satellite, detects changes in magnetic field - 9/11 peak

Everything we do – Every Decision We Make

Hebrew Culture

Hebrews – agrarian culture - close to the earth –respected the power of Creation – the power of God’s work in Creation. Their relationship with Creation and their relationship with God are dependent upon one another.

Story of Noah –covenant (Gen Ch 9) covenant between humans and all living creatures

Supreme Power of God (Ps 104, Job 38:33-39)

Psalm 104

You set the earth on its foundations so that it shall never be shaken

You make springs gush forth in the valleys

You cause grass to grow for the cattle and plants for people to use

You have made the moon and the stars to mark the seasons – the sun knows the time of its setting

O lord, how manifold your works, in wisdom you have made them all.

The earth is full of your creatures.

Job

Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth?

Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you?

Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go and say “Here we are”?

Who has the wisdom to number the clouds? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, when the dust runs into a mass and the clods cling together?

Creation – two stories - Transcendant and anthropomorphic

Oral Tradition – a way for the humans to understand their world.

sacramental – we experience God’s love and grace in the fecundity of God’s created world.

Visible sign of invisible grace. Sign of God’s divine presence

Psalm 8 (NRSV)

When I look at **your** heavens, the work of **your** fingers, the moon and the stars which **you** have established, what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you cared for them?

Yet you have made them little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

You have given them dominion over the works of your hands – the sheep, oxen, birds, fish ...

God’s Love for Creation (Wis 11:24-12:1)

Quote: For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it. You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living. For your immortal spirit is in all things.

All Creation Praises God – Psalms (148, Canticle of Daniel)

Story of Noah –covenant (Gen Ch 9) covenant between humans and all living creatures

<p>PS 148 Praise the LORD ^(A)from the heavens; Praise Him ^(B)in the heights! ² Praise Him, ^(C)all His angels; ³ Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! ⁴ Praise Him, ^{(C)(E)}highest heavens, And the ^(E)waters that are above the heavens! Sea monsters and all ^(K)deeps; ⁸ ^(U)Fire and hail, ^(M)snow and ^(N)clouds; ^(Q)Stormy wind, ^(P)fulfilling His word; ⁹ ^(Q)Mountains and all hills; Fruit ^(R)trees and all cedars; ¹⁰ ^(S)Beasts and all cattle; ^(T)Creeping things and winged fowl; ¹¹ ^(U)Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth; ¹² Both young men and virgins; Old men and children.</p>	<p>Canticle of Daniel Bless the Lord – all you works of the Lord You heavens You waters Sun and moon Stars of heaven Rain and dew Fire and heat All you winds Ice and cold Frosts and snow Mountains and hills Birds of the air Wild animals and cattle</p>
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Jesus - True is Jesus’ time also – parables

Incarnation

“You are the salt of the earth, the light of the world”,
“the sower and the seed”,
“Jesus as the true vine and we are the branches”,
“the Good Shepherd”,
“the mustard seed”.

Benedict

Rene Dubos: Biologist and Environmentalist

Managed the land in a way to sustain their livelihood, yet also with an ethical approach to Creation. Model of good stewardship for Medieval Europe .

Bernard of Clairvaux: “The trees and the stones will teach you what you never learn from the masters.”

Hildegard – We are dressed in the scaffold of creation

In seeing – to recognize the world

In hearing – to understand

In smelling – to discern

In tasting – to nurture

In touching – to govern

In this way humankind comes to know God, for God is the author of all creation.

And so, humankind, full of creative possibilities, is God’s work.

Humankind alone is called to assist God.

Humankind is called to co-create.

God gave humankind the talent to create with all the world.

Benedictine values:

Hospitality – aware of others needs. IN relationship with creation – do we care for the needs of creation?

Humilty – humus – earth – truly see our world - bugs (5500 mammals to 400,000 beetles)

Stability - Horarium

Sense of Place as Home

Ch 8, 10 – Divine Office at Night changed to account for a shorter night during summer

Ch 41 – tlmes for Meals – adjusted for work schedule, length of day

Today – time zones – state and local politics

Local conditions – Ch 55 clothing, Ch 40 drink, Ch 39 food

Ice storm

Breakdown of Balance

Industrial Revolution, Consumerism, Technology – Creation began to become a commodity -- dualism

Privatization of Creation – land, water, food, energy sources

Separates us from Creation

Relationship is mediated through machinery – food, plumbing, HVAC, chemicals

Nature as “out there” – ex, pf state park

Sr. Mary Sue’s song – God said “Poor child, I am all round. But for you I became the dust in the road.”

Pope Benedict XVI

Quote:

“In recent decades the doctrine of Creation had almost disappeared in theology. We are now aware of the damage this has caused...”

This is why for me, renewal of the doctrine of Creation, and a new understanding of the inseparability of Creation and Redemption, takes on such great importance....Creation is groaning – we can sense it, we can almost hear it – and it is waiting for human beings who will preserve it in accordance with God.

Incarnation – more than redemption from sin.

Quote: Judy Cannato - “Field of Compassion

salvation is “about the entire cosmos in some mystery-filled way coming to an awareness of its own divinity in divinity.”

Quote:

“The brutal consumption of Creation begins where God is missing...where we ourselves are the ultimate measure...I believe, therefore, that true and effective measures against the waste and destruction of Creation can only be realized and developed, understood and lived, when Creation is considered as beginning with God.”

More than a fad, a movement, or an incentive – much deeper

Thomas Freidman – economics, politics, and environment.

Cannot just regulate - innovate

Quote

“the only thing more powerful than Mother Nature is Father Profit, and we have not even begun to engage him yet.”

Growing Coherence - personal story – building, parking lot, rain gardens

Awareness

Town Hall Meeting: “Once you have that awareness, it is easy.”

Story: thaenelough– hear the music that the mountains make on the lake.

Celtic Spirituality

Nature has a soul

Carmina Gadelica - Alexander Carmichael
prayers and chants
blended the angels, the saints, creation, Trinity.

Quote:

Bless to me O God the moon that is above me
Bless to me O God the earth that is beneath me
Bless to me O God my wife and children
And bless to me O God myself who have care of them
Pray I this day my prayer to thee, O God
Keep I this day as keep the people of heaven
Go I this day according to Thy laws, O God
Pass I this day as pass the saints in heaven

their voices mirrored the “moaning of the waves” and the “sighing of the wind” – deep rhythm

Contemplative Heart

Of All Good Gifts CBP 1980

Quote: “a contemplative heart reminds us that before a new earth can be born, we must link our efforts at systematic change with a more fundamental need: transformation of the old person into the new. This is a very necessary witness in a society which once expected to solve its problems by technology and activism.”

Richard Rohr – Center for Action and Contemplation

David Stendl-Rast – the process of measuring two things against each other.

Con = with

Temp – measure

Lation – process of

Translates vision into action

Action + Purpose - accomplish (“take control”)

Vision = Meaning - experiences (“give yourself to the experience”) – Judy Cannato story

So it is a give and take process

Dolphin Whisperer

“When one approaches nature with the heart of a child, it never fails to respond.”

What To Do

Begin with a contemplative heart

Hildegard – We are dressed in the scaffold of creation

In seeing – to recognize the world--we notice

In hearing – to understand--we learn

In smelling – to discern--we choose

In tasting – to nurture--we persist, grow, develop

In touching – to govern--we speak, get involved

Notice – in your daily lives how you interact with Creation

Learn – knowledge is awareness – learn about programs and impact of our choices

Choose – to interact differently – begins with each of us -- power as a consumer

Nuture - Be Persistent – we must always find opportunities – we may have much resistance – build bridges. Develop a contemplative heart and a growing awareness.

Govern - Touch - share your new perspectives - develop habits – get involved

Be involved in local efforts - There is no issue in our world today that is more personal or pervasive than this one. We therefore need to affect change on a personal and local level.

Conclusion:

To nurture our intimate relationship with and to deepen our awareness of creation, we begin with our relationship with God, developing a contemplative heart and living out of our Benedictine values. It is what we are called to as Christians and as Benedictines.

Immanuel Kant:

There are two things that fill my soul with reverence and ever-growing wonder – the spectacle of the starry sky that virtually annihilates us as physical beings, and the moral law which raises us to infinite dignity as intelligent beings.