

Francis of Assisi

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We LIVE IN AGE OF IMPOVERISHMENT.

We all feel impoverished. Fear of War, etc.

Mostly we feel impoverished, because we have lost the sense
Of wonder and delight as we experience Creation.

We realize that we have to change, to make a transition from
A Society that is having a disruptive influence on the Earth
To one that has a benign presence.

We make this transition by experiencing creation with a sense of
Wonder and delight. Rather than a commodity for our own
Personal Benefit

Francis of Assisi, his life and teaching can assist us in making such
A Transition, Transformation.

Giovanni Francesco Bernadone (1181-1226), died at 45 was a real
live human being who had such an experience with the universe.

He established a new form of religious life, not Augustinian, not
Benedictine, or Cistercian, but based strictly on the Gospels. Jesus
sent his disciples out to proclaim the Kingdom of God: "Take
nothing for your journey, no script, no food, not extra tunic..."
Like St. John of the Cross, "Nada, Nada, Nada."

Noted perhaps for three things:

- 1) Peacemaker
- 2) Preferential option for the poor

3) Love for the natural world.

Henry D. Thoreau: "In Wilderness is the Preservation of the World"

No, what he said in 1851 in his talk on Walking at the Boston Athenaeum was "In Wildness is the Preservation of the World."

Wildness is a Quality, Wilderness is a quantity.

Thoreau wanted more wild neighbors.

We wish to build a culture that will have a love of the Wild

How; over a period of time we come to know the dynamics
Of a given area, know the plants, birds, animals, weather, etc.
We fall in love with the area and develop that sense of
Wonder and Delight and Joy

Therefore we must develop our sense of wonder and delight

Need guidance, a teacher of elder. Such a teacher was
Francis of Assisi

Loren Isley in his book, *THE UNEXPECTED UNIVERSE*, states
That the heart that is untouched by Wonder may come to an
Impoverished Age

Impoverished Age: Is that not where we find ourselves today,
Living in an IMPORVERISHED AGE?

Besides Isley, others stress the importance of Wonder: Thomas
Berry, Brian Swimme, Aldo Leopold, and earlier, Henry
David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson
John Muir, Bede Griffith, Tom Merton, and I believe that
Dick Murphy had sense of wonder and delight in the
Natural world.

Earlier, in the 12th Century, an historic figure. Giovanni Francis of Assisi, lived an incomparable ecological Experience, who was able to discover traces of God In every manifestation of the universe, and fall back In WONDER.

Contemplation is awakening to the presence of God In the Human Heart and in the Universe around us. It is knowledge by Love.

Teihard: Plunge into matter.

“The world is filled and filled with the Absolute. To see this is to be made free.”

Shankar: All is illusion, myya

Indeed, many have discovered the wonder and delight of the Natural World:

Blake

To see the world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wildflower
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.

Wordsworth:

There was a time when meadow, grove and stream
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem appareled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream

The rainbow comes and goes
How lovely is the rose
Waters on a starry night are beautiful and fair

The sunshine is a glorious birth

To me the meanest flower that grows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

St. John of the Cross
My beloved is the mountains, the
Solitary wooded valleys,
Strange islands...silent music.

Flower in the Crannied Wall
Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower –but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all
I would know what God and man is.

Matthew 6:25, ff
Look at the birds of the air,
They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns

And why do you worry about clothing?
Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not
Nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory
Was not clothed like one of these.

St. Francis of Assisi
Praise be, my Lord for our sister
Mother Earth
Who sustains us and governs us
And brings forth diverse fruits with
Many hued flowers and grass

Simone Weil

Love bade me welcome yet my soul drew back
 Love took my hand and smiling did reply
 Who made the eyes, but I? George Herbert

It is "Looking" which saves and not "eating".

One of the principal truths of Christianity, a truth that goes
 Almost unrecognized today, is that looking is what saves us.

1937. Weil knelt for the first time at the shrine of Assisi,
 Prior 5 years she could not bring herself to pray, though
 She had great visions.

St. Thomas Aquinas

God could not create another God, so he created all the
 Creatures of the universe, each of whom reflect some
 Aspect of Himself

Complicated web of interdependent relationships
 Community of subjects to be communed with, not a
 Collection of objects.

Francis of Assisi: More than any other person was touched
 By wonder.

Two books of Scriptures in his time: the bible and the natural
 World. Both were revelatory.

Black Death. 1/3rd of world's population was wiped out

Black Death. Occurred the 14th Century. Half of Europe was
 Decimated. 1/2 of Florence decimated in three months. They
 did not know it was coming from, except
 Coming from the earth. So they turned from the earth as
 Though the earth were evil, no longer revelatory

In the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries lost sense of sacredness of
 The earth and the universe. Birds and animals were merely
 Machines and had no spiritual dimension
 Rene de Carte, Galileo, Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton.
 Francis Bacon in the 16th century felt that we should improve

Earth was a machine, wound it up. A bird was a machine
 No inner life. Only spiritual thing was man's mind.
 On Nature, So developed the industrial Revolution, then the
 Atomic Bomb, the Hydrogen Bomb

Now with the new cosmology and discoveries of Quantum
 Physics, we are coming to recognize that there is after
 All a spiritual dimension to the universe. A complicated
 Web of interdependent relationships.

Perhaps a new sense of wonder and delight in the natural
 World is developing.

Nov. 29, 1979, Pope John II did declare St. Francis Patron Saint
 of ecologists with all the liturgical honors & privileges
 Entailed in that proclamation.”

Oct. 27, 1986, one of the great prophetic events of the 20th century

Took place in Assisi when religious leaders came together to Pray for peace. On that day history was made. A page was Turned. The world will never be the same again. John Paul II, the host, issued the invitations: he had consulted The Dalai Lama, the Chief Rabbi of Rome and the ArchB of Canterbury who was then the Sec. Gen. Of Council of Churches. All agreed that the time had come for religions To pray together for Peace, International Justice, and Preservation of our Mother Earth. The patron was to be St. Francis of Assisi. Mother T. of Calcutta was there as Well.

The Dalai Lama with representations of other religions Entered the Basilica, welcomed by the Bishop of Rome, And after singing Psalm 148 in Greek (Let everything that Lives praise the Lord), all paused for wordless praise Then made their way to 12 different places in Assisi Where they prayed separately according to their own Tradition,

But have we been faithful to the teaching of Francis of Assisi
And of the findings of the new cosmology, that the natural
World and the human community are a single sacred
Community

Our reigning cosmology is not framed by recent awe-inspiring
Discoveries of the unfolding of the universe – a “communion
Of subjects rather than a collection of objects”- but rather
BY CONSUMMERISM. Our principle role is to mass not
Wisdom but STUFF, and our chief teachers are not spiritual
Or family elders, but advertisers whose primary aim is to sell
PRODUCTS

THOMAS Berry sums up both the process and the goal of

Consumer society. "The ideal is to take the greatest Possible amount of natural resources, put them through The consumer economy as quickly as possible, then on to The waste heap. This we consider as progress – even though The immense accumulation of junk is overwhelming the land Scape, saturating the skies, and filling the oceans.

Soul-loss: This crimped, commercial cosmology, is contributing , in contemporary North America to "soul-loss."
As condominium complexes displace farmland, as strip malls Spread across wetlands, as glare and smog obscure the skies, We lose touch with Creation, our primordial source of Revelation. This is a horror, a spiritual catastrophe whose Consequences we cannot even begin to forecast

What happens to the outer world, happens to the inner world

If the outer world is diminished in its grandeur, then the Emotional, imaginative, intellectual, and spiritual life of The human is diminished or extinguished {T. Berry)

A thing is right when it preserves the beauty, integrity and Stability of the whole biotic community, otherwise it is Wrong.

Without soaring birds, the great forests, the sounds and Coloration of the insects. The free-flowing streams, the The flowering fields, the sight of the clouds by day and stars At night, we become impoverished in all that makes us Human.

The Great Work:

What is real progress? For Berry, authentic progress Rest in what he terms 'the Great Work.' Through which we

As a species move from being the planet's plunderers to its benefactors and becoming "present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner." This entails a move from "wasteworld" – the result of our industrial exploitation of the planet – to a "wonderworld" – where the beauty and grace of creation are allowed to flourish. The task will require a major reorientation of the four basic pillars of society, government, religion, the university and corporations. They must embrace the earth and the universe as their primary education

We all have specific life works: teacher, logger, fisherman, BUT OUR GREAT WORK is that our technological civilization make the transition from having a disruptive influence on the earth to that of having a benign influence. THIS IS THE TRANSITION that we must make. We make this transition primarily through experiencing creation as a source of WONDER AND DELIGHT, rather than a commodity for our personal use.

Earlier, in the 12th century, an historic figure, Francis of Assisi, lived an incomparable ecological experience, who was able to discover traces of God in every manifestation of the universe, and fall back in WONDER AND DELIGHT.

Not only was he guide to peace, not only did he have a preferential option for the poor, but he gives us guidance on how to love the wild earth and view it with WONDER AND DELIGHT.

How do we cultivate wonder:

- 1, By meditation, walking meditation
2. Working in your small garden

3. Walking through an area until you know the dynamics
4. By entering into the Earth, Universe

Mostly we don't realize that we are living on the earth.
We leave our neat carpeted homes, move into the carport,

Travel over paved roads to the mall, unaware that we are
Living on a planet in the Milky way galaxy of 300 billion
Stars, one of a trillion galaxies

The simplest way to accomplish this entering into the Earth
And Universe is to go out half an hour before "sunset" at a
Time when Mars is low on the horizon. It is helpful
If another planet is visible such as Jupiter or Venus.
Bring along a child. All of these bodies are moving
In a single plane around the Sun. As you view them
There comes a wonderful moment when you enter into
The universe all at once: you feel in an experiential,
Imaginative, and direct way the Earth slowly turning
Away from the Sun. You have a sense of the plane in which
The planets move. You feel the immensity of the Earth as it
Rolls away from the great sun. It happens in a flash. A
Single surprising shudder passes through you and you
Realize you are standing on the back of something like a
Cosmic whale, one that is slowly rotating its great bulk on
The surface of an unseen ocean. Once you enter this
Experience of the world, you will be able to enter it
Again more easily.

PRIMARY GATEWAYS ARE DAWN AND DUSK.

You will feel an ocean of wonder as you take a first step

Into inhabiting the actual universe and solar system and Earth. You are soaring around a star that floats in the Vast ocean of the cosmos.

Earlier, in the 13th Century, an historic figure, Francis of Assisi, Lived an incomparable ecological experience who was able To discover traces of God in every manifestation of the universe, and fall back in Wonder.

Once you discover Wonder it becomes contagious and you wish to Share it with others. and assist humanity in making that transition From a society that is having a disruptive influence on the earth, to one that will have a benign presence to the earth.

Richard Murphy has this sense of wonder and delight in the natural World. Several years ago he asked me to accompany him to a spot On the upper Iron River where he wished to examine some past mining activity. He asked me to come along as a photographer. Later he would show slides to John' group.

It was in the spring, the very end of April. Away from the former mining activity, closer to the river, the hillside was alive with an array of spring flowers: bleeding heart, fawn lily,