

The Sacredness of Creation



In the Franciscan tradition, the incarnation is at the heart of a creation-affirming spirituality. We meet God in creation because we meet God everywhere! Instead of a barrier to the spiritual life, creation is a doorway. People who live in deep and harmonious relationship with nature have always known this. Sarah Augustine, a Tewa woman from New Mexico, writes:

Conversation with [Indigenous elders] has helped me to glimpse existence from an Indigenous cosmology and provided me a perspective about the nature of reality, which really begins with insight on the nature of the Creator.

Romans 1 states:

This is because what is known about God should be plain to them because God made it plain to them. Ever since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—God's eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, because they are understood through the things God has made. So humans are without excuse. (Verses 19–20, Common English Bible)

This Scripture is consistent with an Indigenous worldview—that the nature of the Creator is evident in the creation. What does creation tell us about God's divine nature?

Indigenous Peoples have been accused of animism—that is, worshipping the creation rather than the Creator. But really, the basis of Indigenous spirituality is reverence. The Diné (Navajo), my relatives from New Mexico and Arizona, “do not worship the Sun, or the sun bearer, as supposed,” Steve Darden, my Diné mentor, instructed me. Rather, they express reverence for the Spirit of Life, the Creator, by finding elements of the Creator's nature in the Sun—faithful, unfailing. Giver of Light. Giver of life. . . .

Reverence is deep respect. The Creator is evident in creation, which surrounds me. I can see it and experience it with my senses. I am part of it. Humility is acknowledging that I am not separate from creation; I am a part of a web of life. I have been taught that this mutual dependence is a gift. Life is a gift. [1]

For Franciscan sister Ilia Delio, the universe is an overflowing expression of divine love and creativity. She seeks to help us to recover a sense of the sacredness of creation. In a recent book, she wrote this poem/prayer, which reflects a deep reverence and respect for creation:

Creation flows from the fountain fullness
of creative energy,
Springing from a creative and dynamic Source of Love.
Relational, personal, generative, communicative
Love
Spilling over on the canvas of space-time;
Creation is like a song
That flows in the most beautiful of harmonies.

What could possibly account for such
Creative beauty bubbling up
Into life?
Could it be
The Beauty of Life itself,
A Divine community of Love? . . . [2]

[1] Sarah Augustine, *The Land Is Not Empty: Following Jesus in Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery* (Herald Press: 2021), 190, 192.

[2] Ilia Delio, *The Hours of the Universe: Reflections on God, Science, and the Human Journey* (Orbis: 2021), 51.