



***Together in this great work we stand,***  
*ev'ry race, age and creed.*

***Together in this great work!***

***We speak for life, we hope to heal.***

***We care for earth, all that is real***

***Together in this great work!***

***Together in this great work!***

Star-gazers, gardeners, teachers are we.

Artists, poets and friends, scientists,

mystics and lovers of life;  
 standing as one for the earth;  
 coming together as earth.

Sea-watchers, prophets and dreamers are we.  
 Inventors, healers and crones,  
 homesteaders, dancers and keepers of seed.  
 standing as one for the earth;  
 coming together as earth. (*Jan Novotka*)

**Reflection:**

Nancy Schreck, OSF

Alice Walker, once asked, "Is there anything more painful than realizing we did not know the right questions to ask at the only time on earth we would have the opportunity to do so?"

There are new questions for our time such as

**how do we and ought we think about God and the world, and about ourselves in relation to God and the world?**

Or the question posed by Sallie McFague,

**"What if we dared to think of our planet as the body of God?"**

God, not transcendent over the universe in the sense of external to, or apart from it,  
 but as the source, power and goal;

the spirit that enlivens and loves the entire process and its material forms.

God the inspirited body of the entire universe,

the animating, living spirit that produces guides, and saves all that is.

What if the cosmos was the picture we turned to when we try to imagine **divine incarnation?**

What if as Thomas Berry says "**the body of Christ is ultimately the entire universe?**"

For the past several hundred years at least, Christianity has been concerned almost exclusively with the salvation of the individual human beings (souls) rather than with the well being of the oppressed including not only the oppression of human beings but also the oppressed earth and all its life forms.

**What if we believed that salvation is about healing, and just as the cosmos itself can be ruptured and torn apart by injustice, so too it can be healed by human efforts to bring justice back to the human relationships with earth, air, fire, water, and one another.** (Matthew Fox)

While Christians generally understand God's will for salvation on earth to involve healing and wholeness for human beings, we must extend our understanding to include **healing and wholeness for the rest of creation.** To usher in God's will on earth as in heaven requires that we treat the earth as if it were heaven. This means we must treat it with respect for its sacredness and ensure its health, beauty and wholeness. Human responsibility that reconciles humankind and creation with God does not require dominating the earth as Christians have often misunderstood their task, but loving the earth as one's kindred and one's self. Restoration of right relationship with God includes

restoration of right relationship with the earth. Such restoration is redemptive because we move toward God's original intention of the harmonious interrelatedness of life. (Karen Baker-Fletcher and Garth Kasium Baker- Fletcher)

Though we live in a new time, so much of theological worldview continues to come to us from the Council of Nicea: While its hold is fading many continue to be formed in a kind of theological thinking in which there is the world (which was evil and to be escaped,) the church (which was the vehicle of escape) and heaven or the other world (our real purpose in life.) We have developed much of our theology based on this world denying approach. As I have said, much has shifted but it is not left behind.

Thomas Berry says, *"The deepest crises experienced by any society are those moments of change when the story becomes inadequate for meeting the survival demands of a present situation. Such, it seems to me, is the situation we must deal with now. We are confused at present because our historical situation has changed so profoundly. Our story, too, has changed. We no longer know its meaning or how to benefit from its guidance. We are in trouble now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories. The old story, the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it, is no longer effective. Yet we have not learned the new story."*

***Share reflections on this reading.***

## **Prayer**



Hail to the Maker, the Ancient One,  
Mother and Father of all that was, and is,  
and will be!

Today we join with birds and trees  
and animals, with rocks and rivers  
and mountains and the whole creation to offer  
you our worship and honour.

**All. Come to us, God of Life!**

**We invoke you!**

**Come to fill us with your creative power,  
with the pulsing lifeblood of ages.**

**Make us alive with celebration and with  
rejoicing!** (light candle)

Hail to the Christ, the Compassionate One,

**All. Creator God, we praise you for the wonder of human life and of all your creation.**

**Help us to treasure these gifts and live gratefully in our universe.**

**Candlelight supper!**

who was alive and was dead  
and now lives in the heart of all things!

**All. Come to us, Healing One!**

**We invoke you!**

**Renew our yearning for emptiness and for  
silence.** (Light candle)

Hail to the Spirit Holy,  
messenger of God's Wisdom,  
primal fire of creation and breath of life!  
From the time of dreaming you made your home  
with holy souls,  
making them friends of God and prophets.  
You invite us to join with you  
in the circle dance of trinity,  
to die and be reborn in the whirling wheel of God.

**All. Come to us, Spirit of Life!**

**We invoke you!**

**Renew your people in the passion of the  
ancients:**

**make of us mystics and poets and prophets,  
that the earth may be rekindled in love.**

(Light candle)