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Enchantment

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The late Fr. Thomas Berry, a leader in the eco-spirituality movement, styled himself a "geologist" rather than a theologian. This means Berry built his images of God and his spirituality from the ground up rather than from the top down.

When asked what was the one most important element of a practical, everyday spirituality of living, he answered with an intriguing word: "Enchantment."

In order to engage with an active spirituality that makes sense, that works and is effective for our times, Berry urges the awakening of an energetic sense of awe and wonder within us. Enchantment comes as we see the whole universe, and especially the Earth that gave us birth, as vast, sacred mysteries.

We have been lost in the gaunt grip of a centuries-old split in our thinking and in our religious sense between the divine and the world, the sacred and the secular, the holy and the ordinary, the consecrated and the congregation, between heaven and earth, saint and sinner. In our day this split in our consciousness is beginning to heal, as we rediscover a more creation-centered view -- one that recognizes the interconnectedness of all things and the nagging, pervasive presence of the divine mystery always and everywhere within our world.

Enchantment! It means being completely charmed by, bedazzled with, under the spell of the mystery and beauty in the world around us. The most healing of all emotions are awe and wonder. What's more, the altar rail that encloses the holy sanctuary runs clear around our whole planet.

In the first book of the Old Testament, we find Jacob exclaiming after an unexpected encounter with God in a dream: "Truly Yahweh is in this place and I never knew it! How awe-inspiring this place is! This is nothing less than a house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

When we see this world as holy ground, we take off our shoes and connect with a dynamic and transfiguring energy and will. The greatest scientist of our time Albert Einstein said this: "The most beautiful and powerful experience we can have is the encounter with mystery. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true science, true art, and true religion. Whoever does not know it is as good as dead, his eyes dimmed."

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