

# Falling in love on Earth Day

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*Spirit of Life*

This Saturday marks the 53rd anniversary of the first ever Earth Day, which began in an era when the stench of “air pollution was commonly accepted as the smell of

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prosperity” and mainstream America remained largely oblivious to environmental concerns (earthday.org). That was particularly true about the now undeniable link between environmental crises and human health. We’ve learned a lot since then. Sadly, our ability to implement necessary changes to our habits has not kept pace with our knowledge. And this is not only an external judgement; I know the truth and the challenge of this observation in my own life.

Last month, U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres observed, “Humanity is on thin ice — and that ice is melting fast! Our world needs climate action on all fronts — everything, everywhere, all at once.” Warnings like this are certainly accurate and beyond worrisome. This Earth we share is the great common denominator for all of humanity, and it should also be our common motivator. Motivation is a funny thing, though, and relying only on doom and gloom (even if this is solidly based science) may be insufficient to get all of us into the conversation, much less moved to change. We definitely and desperately need to get real, but I’m also wondering this year about adding a layer of unabashed celebration into the mix of Earth Day. Let’s fall in love again with this spinning ball of blue and green that gives all of us — without exception — life.

At this time of year in Maine, it is not difficult at all to delight in creation. The whole world is waking up with the accompanying sights, sounds and feels of spring. I’ve seen sparrows at the birdfeeder lately that have launched me into long-forgotten hymns of praise for the God of the sparrow and the whale. This Earth we inhabit is full of opportunities for wonder and joy, and all



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around us, they are begging for our attention. In fact, ‘tis the season to pay attention — with all of our senses and with our hearts. The flowers are telling us a story of hope. The trees are testifying that barrenness can give way to life, even if it begins with a bud so small it might escape notice. The birds and peepers certainly have a story of encouragement to share, and it is quite loud! This is also a pretty awesome (and unique) location to learn about the nuances of water and its gentle power to shape even the hardest of rocks.

The Earth is an amazing and sacred gift, worthy of our celebration on Earth Day and every day. Perhaps our love for the Earth, our delight in its abundance and our acknowledgement of its diversity and resilience (alongside our fear and concern) can move us to make necessary changes, both individually and together. Goodness knows when we are in love with someone or something, we find all kinds of ways to access our creativity and reserves of resources. We often don’t even think of it as effort. Why couldn’t this be true for Earth as well?

“Why can’t Earth Day be every day?” The question is always asked at the conclusion of Earth Day events. The answer is that it can be if we make it a priority. Alice Walker once wrote, roughly, “I think it [peeves] God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don’t notice it.” Surely, there is truth in this ... and perhaps this is our charge. To pay attention. To be grateful. To consider the impact of our actions and inactions. And to resolve anew to love the Earth into health and wholeness.

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