

## "If it does not thrive, neither can we" -- an Earth Day reflection from Sally McFague

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"The body of God is the entire universe; it is all matter in its myriad fantastic, ancient and modern forms, from quarks to galaxies. More specifically, the body of God needing our attention is planet Earth, a tiny piece of divine embodiment that is our home and garden. In order to care for this garden, we need to know about it; in order to help all creatures who constitute this body flourish, we need to understand how we humans fit into this body.

All understandings of creation and providence rest on assumptions about what the world is like and where humans belong in it... In our evolutionary, ecological view of reality, everything is interrelated and interdependent. As we have seen, "ecological unity" is both radically individualistic and radically relational. In an organism or body, the whole flourishes *only* when all of the different parts function well; in fact, the whole is nothing but each and every individual part doing its particular thing successfully. Nothing is more unified than a well-functioning body, but at the same time, nothing relies more on complex, diverse individuality.

Hence, the neighborhood in which we have been set down is one that we must learn to care for in all of its diverse parts and needs. We must become "ecologically literate," understanding the earth's most basic law: that there is no way the whole can flourish unless all parts are cared for. This means distributive justice is the key to sustainability; or, to phrase it differently, our garden home, the body of God, will be healthy long-term only if all parts of it are cared for appropriately. Before all else, the community, our planet, must survive which it can do only if all members have access to basic necessities. We need to learn "home economics," the basic rules of how our garden home can prosper -- and what will destroy it. The science of global warming -- its causes and effects -- is one important piece of home economics whose rules we must learn and obey.

We must do so because, as the self-reflective part of God's body -- the part that knows that we know -- we have become partners with God in maintaining the health of creation, as climate change makes painfully clear. We are no longer the peak of creation, the one above all others and for whom the others were made; rather, we are at one and the same time the neediest of all creatures and the most powerful.... In a strange paradox, we who have unprecedented power over the planet are at the same time at its mercy: if it does not thrive, neither can we." -- Sally McFague, *A New Climate for Theology*

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