

4 The Gift of the Heart-Mind

Check in

Grace: I ask the Holy Spirit to open my heart-mind so that I can listen to Earth's living beings.

Hymn: *For the Beauty of the Earth* (Rutter) (Youtube)

Scripture: Job 12: 7–10

*Even birds and animals have much they could teach you;
8 ask the creatures of earth and sea for their wisdom.
9 All of them know that the Lord's hand made them.
10 It is God who directs the lives of his creatures;
everyone's life is in God's power.*

Explanation: The emerging discipline of Biosemiotics gives us a new story of planetary connectedness. It is a scientific project based on the recognition that life is fundamentally grounded in semiotic, that is, communication processes. It offers new ways of understanding culture, nature and evolution. It asserts that life and matter are not just structures, they are signs, they tell us something, they have meaning. It is a theory of life's creative agency. As Christians, we believe that God's love is this creative agency. Biosemiotics gives a framework for environmental ethics, which is the study of the moral relationships humans have with Earth's ecosystems and life. How do we interact with plant and animal organisms ethically, recognizing that they have a moral value? If God's love is the transcendent power of creation, then how do we enter into this power so that we love all creatures as God loves them? Our brain-mind gives us knowledge, but it is our heart-mind which gives us awareness of this planetary communion and the energy to act. Approximately 33% of agricultural output depends on insect and animal pollinators. Broad spectrum pesticides, habitat loss and invasive species are destroying insect populations and/or making them more susceptible to disease, for instance colony collapse in bee populations.

Take a minute or two to recall the gardens you love, the ones where you feel immersed in the planetary communion. Recall the bees, wasps, butterflies, flies and birds you have seen in these gardens. What are they saying to you?

And we activate the heart-mind through simple meditations like the Third Prayer Exercise of Ignatius.

Prayer and Sharing: Take 10 minutes to pray Ignatius' **Third Method of Prayer**, (paragraph # 258 in the *Spiritual Exercises*) using the text from the Canticle of St Francis:

**Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains us and governs us and who produces
varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.**

Then share briefly an experience of your own related to the poem, and/or the scripture passage above.

Share on the following focus questions:

1. Can I support insect and bird pollinators by growing a diverse population of native flowers in my garden, or in pots on my balcony, outside my front door, on my driveway?
2. Can we, as a CLC community, commit to this simple action in common, a community that supports insect pollinators and therefore, biodiversity and food crops?
3. What is my heart telling me?

Final Reflection:

Mary Oliver in “House of Light” **The Gift:**

“I wanted to thank the mockingbird for the vigour of his song. Every day he sang from the rim of the field while I picked blueberries or just idled in the sun. Every day he came fluttering by to show me, and why not, the white blossoms of his wings. So one day I went there with a machine, and played some songs of Mahler. The mockingbird stopped singing; he came close and seemed to listen. Now when I go down to the field, a little Mahler spills through the sputters of his song. How happy I am, lounging in the light, listening as the music floats by! And I give thanks also for my mind, that thought of giving a gift. And mostly I’m grateful that I take this world so seriously.”

Ongoing Practice: I contemplate the community of flowers and insects, give thanks to the Creator for the interconnectedness of all life, and open my heart to right action.

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