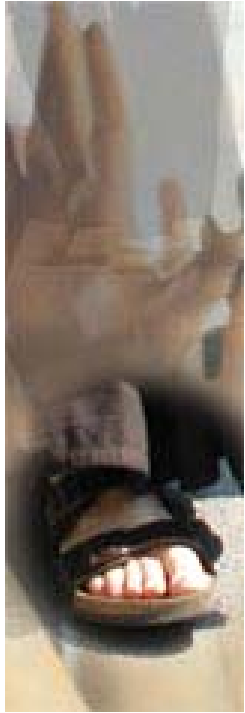


## JPIC Reflections



Discussion

Questions:

How does your ecological footprint compare with others in your region or nation?

What changes can you consider to reduce the size of your ecological footprint?

“Eco-penance”  
is both  
an interior attitude  
and a praxis,  
a developing way of  
life.”

**Concrete every day and practical things to do.**

If you have a computer, go to the web page: [www.myfootprint.org](http://www.myfootprint.org), fill out the questionnaire to find out how much ecologically productive land area it takes to sustain your life style. The United States has the world's largest footprint at 23.7 acres per person; a sustainable footprint would be **4.6 acres**. This contrasts with Bangladesh and Mozambique having footprints of 1.3 acres per capita (about 1/20th of the US footprint).

Justice, Peace & the  
Integrity of Creation

## Ecospirituality & Francis (part 2)

by  
**Loren Kerkof, OFM**



PROVINCE OF  
SANTA BARBARA

JPIC OFFICE

1112 26th Street  
Sacramento, CA 95816  
916.448.8924 X23 phone  
916.443.2019 fax



## Ecospirituality & Francis (part 2) by Loren Kerkof, OFM

Scientific thought shifted during the past decades from cosmology, the study of the way nature works, to "cosmo-genesis", the study of the way every existing thing in the universe originates from the Big Bang. This insight has expanded our spirituality to include a new understanding of creation:

Creation is an on-going reality. God is making me - now, in the present.

God is making each human person out of the concrete chaos of chemicals and gravitational forces, movements of history and human activities in which that person comes to be.

Evolution is the magnificent story of how God created, is creating, our world. Catholics have no theological reason to oppose this scientific view of creation. In fact, it is spiritually and theologically more awesome.

When we realize that we live in an evolutionary universe with Christ as the center and the goal, then we see that our actions can help move the universe towards its fulfillment in Christ (or thwart it). **What we do matters to the matter of the universe.** Nevertheless in spite of our failures, I believe that the world will still be brought to the conclusion that God intended for it from the beginning, a mystery of the Incarnate Word and the glorified Christ.

**What aspects of spirituality can we work on this Lent?** \*\*\* Deepening our awareness of our interconnectedness to creation:

Francis offers a familial model of relating to creation. This model calls us to an active stance as "brother" and "sister" to non-human creation. Let's realize even more the creative goodness of God that *makes us all to even exist*. Contact with nature is a fundamental component of Franciscan spirituality because of our emphasis on a Christ centered universe. Walk in the woods, visit the ocean, work in a garden, watch the "sunrise" - all are Christ contacts.

\*\*\**Increasing our awareness of the intrinsic value of everything that exists:*

Pay attention to the details of creation; contemplating things of nature is a way of seeing Christ. Everything speaks of the infinite love of God: trees, flowers, worms, insects- all are saints gazing up into the face of God. Creation can be a great place to find God. As Angela of Foligno put it, "This world is pregnant with God."

**Realizing that our every day actions contribute to our present ecological crisis** and thus, our need for ongoing penance or conversion. "Eco-penance" is both an interior attitude and a praxis, a developing way of life. Let us strive for consistency between our beliefs about creation and our behavior towards it. I see this effort as part of what Francis called "the life of penance."

**Eco-spirituality would encourage us to experience God in nature.**

Let's get to know other creatures; let's experience nature itself. One friar suggests that we get to know non-vertebrates to get a *really new* insight into God. Creatures glorify God by just being what they are. God reveals Godself uniquely in every single individual creature.

Maybe we could chose one creature, like water, and really get to know its meaning and value, and to experience its unique qualities and gifts. What would true respect of water entail? Could we gain a greater appreciation of how God's presence is uniquely revealed in water; of how God is incarnated in water, of how water blesses us and glorifies God by just being water?

Or take oxygen. God created the earth with enough oxygen that life could exist but not too much so that it would not be too dangerous. Think of how an oxygen molecule enters our bodies and becomes part of us for a time and helps sustain our life processes, and then leaves our bodies and becomes part of someone else's body; and that it has done this for millions of years! So maybe the same molecule was breathed in by dinosaurs and by Jesus and by Osama Bin Laden and by our pet cat before we breathed it in.

A friend of mine in Chicago has a prayer corner in her apartment with a window overlooking Lake Michigan. In the morning she watches the sun appear on the horizon and imagines the reality of *earth* moving, spinning, carrying her east.