



We Mercies

Care for Creation

As you take the next step, remember the traditional custodians of the land

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

(John 1:14)

The American theologian, Elizabeth Johnson, who stunned many with her groundbreaking work *She Who Is*, has written an article *For God so loved the cosmos*. Here are some of her insights in the article.

When the Word became flesh, all creation was drawn into the divine embrace.

Scientific discoveries have made clear that human flesh is part of the evolutionary network of life on this planet, which in turn is part of a solar system, which in turn came into being as a part of a long cosmic history.

This awareness of our natural history provides new insight into the cosmic meaning of the “flesh” that the Word became.

Quite literally, human beings are made of stardust.

We share with all other living creatures on our planet a common genetic ancestry. Bacteria, worms, pine trees, blueberries, the great gray whales – we are all genetic kin in the great community of life. While human thought and love are distinct, they are not something injected into the universe from without. Rather, they are the flowering in us of deeply cosmic energies. In the human species nature becomes conscious of itself and open to fulfillment in grace and glory.

Understanding the human species as an intrinsic part of planetary and cosmic matter has far-reaching implications for the meaning of incarnation. In this perspective, the human flesh that the Word became is part of the vast body of the cosmos. Theologians have started to use the phrase “deep incarnation” ... to express this radical divine reach into the very tissue of biological existence and the wider system of nature.

Like all human beings, Jesus carried within himself ... “the signature of the supernovas and the geology and life history of the Earth”. The genetic structure of his cells made him part of the whole community of life that descended from common ancestors in the ancient seas. The flesh that the Word became thus reaches beyond Jesus and other human beings to encompass the whole biological world of living creatures and the cosmic dust of which we are composed.

Does Jesus have anything to do with the cosmos?

Exploring his incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection with this question in mind yields some inspiring and challenging answers.

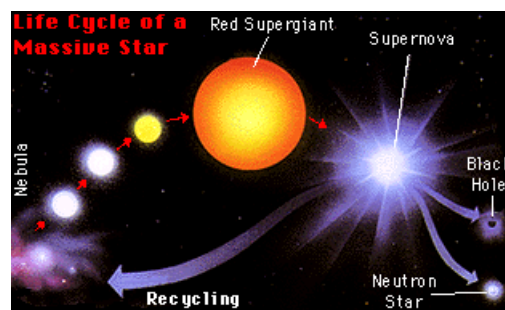
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This “deep” way of reflecting on the incarnation provides an important insight.

By becoming flesh the Word of God confers a blessing on the whole of earthly reality in its material dimension, and beyond that, on the cosmos in which the Earth exists. Rather than being a barrier that distances us from the divine this material world becomes a sacrament that can reveal divine presence. In place of spiritual contempt for the world, we ally ourselves with the living God by loving the whole natural world, part of the flesh that the Word became.

Humans need stories - grand, compelling stories - that help orient us in our lives and in the cosmos. The Epic of Evolution is such a story, beautifully suited to anchor our search for planetary consensus, telling us of our nature, our place, our context. If we can revere how things are, and can find a way to express gratitude for our existence, then we should be able to figure out how to share the Earth with one another and with other creatures, how to restore and preserve its elegance and grace, and how to commit ourselves to love and joy and laughter and hope.

(Ursula Goodenough, *The Sacred Depths of Nature*)



And God saw that it was good.