

Our Constant Nature

April 24, 2016

Sue Porto did another amazing job putting together a special service here at Albertson. I'm so grateful to be part of today's Earth Day celebration.

Because she's so organized and committed to a wholistic approach to today's service, she asked me to let her know the title of my talk a few weeks ago. I generally like to let the events of the week preceding my guest appearance to direct and focus my message; I'm one of those speakers whom, if I work too hard or spend too much time crafting my message, it ends up sounding a little too slick. I used to work in advertising.

And I work better under pressure: two days to write something amazing? That's when I feel most inspired.

In this case however the title sprang to mind almost immediately: Our Constant Nature.

Of course I want to talk about Nature today... it is Earth Day after all. But I want to talk about people, too. We have a relationship with Mother Earth. She supports us, and we, in turn, pledge to keep her safe. That's in our nature, our human nature. And whether we recognize it or not, it's kind of a contract we have with the Earth -- mutual support.

Nobody is born disrespecting the planet. Littering and polluting are behaviors we learn. As we grow up and learn from society that there is more value in gold than in the rock it's found in, we have no compunction about destroying that rock. As we learn that there's more value in oil than in the sea or sands above it, we minimize the value of those natural beauties. And as we put more stock in the almighty dollar, we lose touch with the value and fragility of our climate.

But make no mistake about it: these values are taught. They're given to us by self-serving people who have forgotten the very planet that supports them.

But our Nature is one that recognizes the unity and harmony with the Earth that is our inheritance as children of God.

We often consider her Mother Earth because our planet provides all of what we need to survive, including other human beings. She comes complete with food, shelter, water, and community. She may hold viruses, but she also holds cures. Growing right next to poison ivy is a plant called Jewel Weed, which is the perfect antidote. Mother Nature gives us headaches, but she also gives us Willow Bark, a natural form of aspirin.

We are more than guests on this planet, we are offspring of Nature. That's why we HAVE Nature. And like any good children, we appreciate the care our Mother provides, and as we grow up, we in turn become responsible for the health and well-being of our parents.

It is the nature of Mother Earth to provide and balance. It is most natural for us, too, to seek personal and interpersonal balance.

It is the nature of Mother Earth to heal and evolve, as it is ours.

Just as Earth has been our steward, and will continue to be for as long as we live in physical form here, we have a responsibility -- and its in our nature! -- to be stewards for the Earth. Remember that disrespect is antithetical to our nature. We have to learn to devalue the climate, the wetlands, and the flora and fauna. That gives me hope because it means we can teach and learn to re-value the same.

Let's begin by healing our own values. Be the steward of your own yard, home, and consumption. Don't worry about whether your neighbor is recycling unless you are doing all you can yourself. Pick one thing that you can do, anything, and make it a habit. Plant flowers that attract honeybees, pick up litter you see as you walk your dog or hike in the woods. Don't use pesticides on your own lawn. Reduce your consumption of plastics. You don't have to spend a ton of money installing solar panels or changing out your septic system to something more sustainable. But you *can* store your leftovers in glass containers instead of plastic. You *can* ask your local retailers to recycle plastic shopping bags.

You can love your own little plot of land, whether it's a container garden on your balcony or acres of crops. Talk to the earth when you're sitting outside in nature. Choose non-invasive species if you're putting in new landscaping. Just one little thing that connects you and reminds you of what being a steward means. It's easier than you think; it's in your nature.

Amen.