

Thoughts from the Garden on Earth Day

by Heather Ganz, CSJ

“This is *incredible*,” said four year old Angelina with head tipped back in amazement. She was referring to the congregation of crows squawking as they soared above our heads. The truth of her statement pierced through me. This is incredible – this child and these crows on this land together – the recognition by a preschooler that life is, indeed, incredible. It’s hard to believe, inconceivable even, this life on Earth. Science is making us aware of the immensity of the universe as well as our common beginning, however we have yet to meet life anywhere else in this vast expanse. Life is, indeed, incredible. The fact that the diversity of life takes shape as crow and child, tree and spider, squirrel and aster, is just as unimaginable. When we experience life in all its forms, we are experiencing God who “is the unlimited depth of love of all that is, a love that overflows into new life.”¹ It is incredible, and yet, it might be the most important thing I believe.



As we celebrate Earth Day 2014, I am aware of Earth. I am aware of her beauty, her scars, her strength, her fragility. Mostly I am aware of my interconnection with all that is. The children know this, and we know it too, but for us grown-ups it is hidden under layers of years and experiences. Three year old Emily stood with her pigtails and bows clucking to the chickens. After a moment, she looked at me with her face lit up and exclaimed, “They understand me!” Who am I to judge the comprehension of a chicken? Emily knows – they are part of her.

Angelina and Emily and every kind of little one challenge me this Earth Day. What kind of world am I preparing for them? When I think of our Preferred Future Planning process that looks fifteen and thirty years down the line, I can’t help but imagine 34 year old Angelina and 33 year old Emily and wonder what their lives will be like. Will they have access to clean water? Will the air they breathe be life-giving or asthma causing? Will the rise in sea level wipe away their home? I recently watched the movie *Chasing Ice* about photographer James Balog who documented the rapid diminishment of glaciers. At the end of the movie he says, “When my daughters... look at me 25 or 30 years from now and say, what were you doing when... global warming was happening and you guys knew what was coming down the road, I want to be able to say, ‘Guys, I was doing everything I knew how to do.’”² I would like to be able to say the same to Angelina and Emily and to all of the incredible life of which I am a part. That is my challenge for this Earth Day and for every day that follows.

¹ Ilia Delio, OSF, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love* (New York: Orbis Books, 2013), 67.

² *Chasing Ice*. Directed by Jeff Orlowski. 2012.