



# EARTH CHARTER

## Study Guide

SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME • SHALOM North America  
OCTOBER 2004

# RELATIONSHIP AND COMMUNITY

*relationship with all of creation. Ecology is the branch of science that studies the interrelationship between organisms and their environment. Ecology is not the same as environmentalism. The word ecology comes from two Greek words, "oikos" meaning house or home, and "logos" meaning word, discourse or mystery.*

*Section II of the Earth Charter issues a call to the human community to come a new self-understanding and a new*

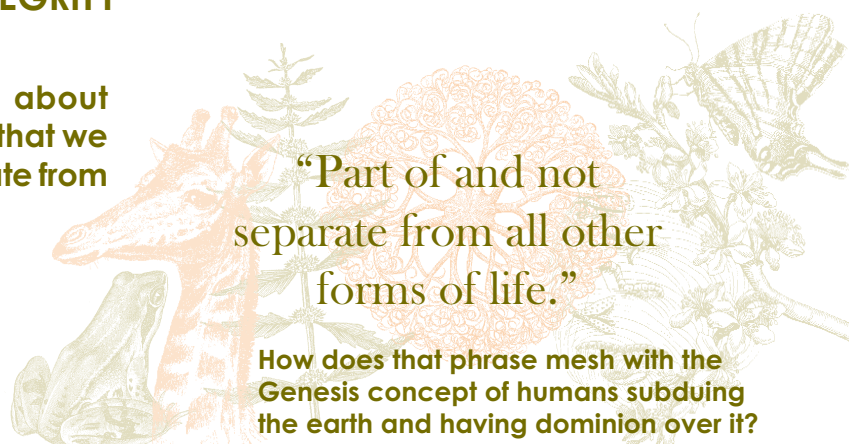
## SECTION II: ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

**When the Earth Charter speaks about ecological integrity, it reminds us that we humans are part of and not separate from all other forms of life.**

At the heart of this section of the Earth Charter is the recognition that relationship and community are the basis of life itself. Earth is our 'home' and we humans exist in mysterious relationship or communion with every facet of the universe. Echoing the words of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22: 34-40), author Thomas Moore suggests that ecology "is basically a form of love. It is the primary work of us all, no matter what we do. It is the primary thing, the only thing. You are either an ecologist or a lost soul."<sup>1</sup>

Presuming that you are not a "lost soul", how do you experience relationship and community with Earth? How would you describe your relationship with Earth?

The Earth Charter begins with the profound declaration



**"Part of and not separate from all other forms of life."**

**How does that phrase mesh with the Genesis concept of humans subduing the earth and having dominion over it?**

that the human community stands "at a critical moment in Earth's history" (Preamble). Geologist Thomas Berry names this critical moment the "Ecozoic Era." Berry suggests that the word "ecozoic" is a better designation than "ecological" because it refers to the integral functioning of, rather than the mere understanding of, the interaction of life systems in their mutually life-enhancing relations.<sup>2</sup> Section II of the Earth Charter outlines clearly what the human community needs to do in order to ensure ecological integrity in our world today. As Chris-

tians, we profess that our faith without good works is dead (James 2:17). As Christians, we know with poets, scientists and mystics alike that our actions on behalf of justice will begin in **AWE, WONDER and CONTEMPLATION.**

Take some time to read Section II of the Earth Charter. Pick out some phrases that speak to you of interaction or relationship with other life systems.

Talk or journal about how you understand and live out any of those relationships.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Moore, "The Ecology of Life," Resurgence 219 (July/August 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Berry, "The Ecozoic Era," Eleventh Annual E.F. Schumacher Lecture, 1991

“The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.” RACHEL CARSON

Rachel Carson believed that any action taken on behalf of ecological integrity must issue first and foremost from an all-abiding sense of wonder. Take some time to consider ways you might deepen your own sense of wonder and contemplation as a way to ground your response to all that Section II of the Earth Charter asks of the human community in the world today.



*sense of wonder*  
WONDER



“The world, you may say, is not a garden, and thinking like a leaf was not the way that humans invented elevators and vaccinations. Indeed, the world we have created is an extraordinary, unprecedented achievement, constructed out of the awesome power of our abstracting, pattern-making brain. But it has lacked the ingredient we discover we depend on to thrive – the idea of **wholeness and connection we call spirit.**”

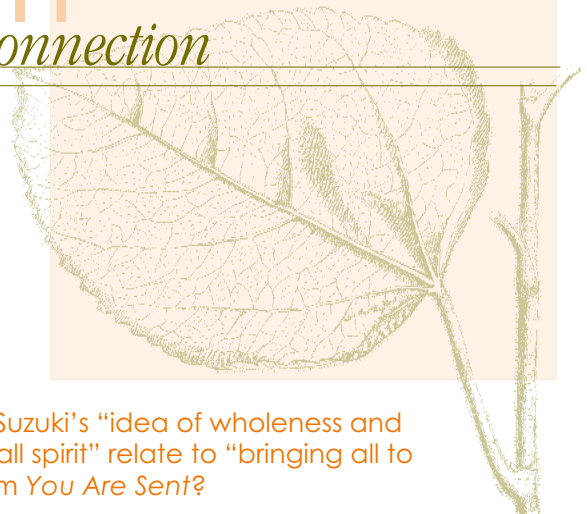
David Suzuki, *The Sacred Balance*

SPIRIT

*wholeness and connection*

“As community we are sent in the power of the Spirit to continue Christ’s mission, to proclaim him, to be transformed and to transform our world, bringing all to that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent.”

*You Are Sent 48*



How does David Suzuki’s “idea of wholeness and connection we call spirit” relate to “bringing all to that oneness” from *You Are Sent*?

Have you ever thought like a leaf? Have you ever heard the “hundred voices” of the woods or the “majestic music” of the sea? Reflect on and describe that experience.





“Living in community often brings individual and community needs into conflict with each other – a situation further complicated when environmental needs in the seventh generation are considered. Making community decisions is hard work. It requires developing communication skills and using group processes. It also requires developing trust among its members. Trust is developed by creating a strong culture that is shaped by consensus building, singing, heart-filled rituals, sharing-times, celebrations, traditions, a mentoring program and childcare, and a flexible and intentional budget. With this trust comes the opportunity to wrestle with issues that shape each of us, the community, and in some ways the larger community.”

Fred Lanphear, *Songaia: An Unfolding Dream*



How does your interpretation or understanding of Lanphear's "living in community" change when you expand your focus from local to national to worldwide to all of creation?

# TRUST

*living in community*



## IT TAKES A UNIVERSE

Thomas Berry

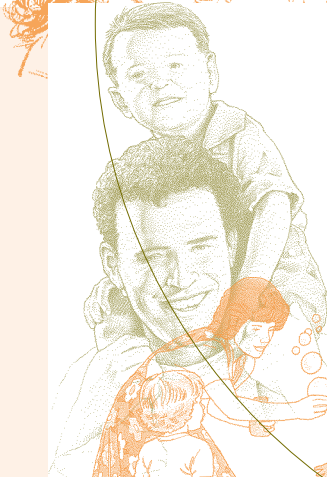
The child awakens to a universe  
The mind of the child to a world of meaning  
Imagination to a world of beauty  
Emotions to a world of intimacy.

It takes a universe to make a child  
Both in outer form and inner spirit  
It takes a universe to educate a child  
It takes a universe to fulfill a child.

And the first obligation of any generation to its children  
Is to bring these two together  
So that the child is fulfilled in the universe  
And the universe in the child

While the stars ring out in the heavens.

How might you bring a child, perhaps your inner child, to become "fulfilled in the universe and the universe in the child"?



# NEXT STUDY GUIDE January 2005

Social and Economic Justice: S. Barbara Paleczny, SSND (CA)



## SOME ACTIONS *for your consideration*

- **Take some time to reread Section II of the Earth Charter and make a list of topics or concepts in this section about which you feel you need more understanding or information in order to live out the call of the Earth Charter.** Join with some friends or colleagues and try to find answers to your questions and deepen your knowledge of the critical global issues by:

- Studying together the information posted on the following two websites:

[www.ecology.com](http://www.ecology.com) and  
[www.ecozoicstudies.com](http://www.ecozoicstudies.com).

- **Examining ways that you and your study partners might work together personally and locally to commit to action the “10 Principles of Good Consumption” outlined in the publication, *Good Stuff? A Behind-the-Scenes Guide to the Things We Buy*.** This publication is available free at [www.worldwatch.com](http://www.worldwatch.com). *Good Stuff* is an excellent practical guide to tips and facts for making more informed choices about common purchases that are in turn intimately linked to the global concerns outlined in Section II of the Earth Charter.

- **Psychology has long told us that we cannot love whom or what we do not know.**

Poets, mystics, scientists and social activists tell us that ecological integrity will come about best if we come to a deeper knowledge of Earth and all creation.

- **Learn from some earth-wise mystics by reading:**

- a biography of Rachel Carson
- the journals of Lucy Maude Montgomery (author of *Anne of Green Gables*)
- the essays of Anne Morrow Lindbergh.

“The woods call you with a hundred voices but the sea has only one – a mighty voice that drowns

## YOUR SOUL



*in its majestic music.*

The woods are human but the sea is of the company of archangels.”

Lucy Maude Montgomery, Letter to Ephraim Weber,  
10 November 1907

- **Over a period of time, find ways to study and put into action with others the mandates issued in Section II of the Earth Charter.** After your time of study, gather together friends for a *special Earth Charter Celebration*.

**Spend time together in prayer and reflection and rewrite Section II of the Earth Charter in the form of a Creed with each statement beginning with the words, “We believe that....”.** Use your Creed in creative ways to try to engage others in learning about and living out the call of the Earth Charter.

- **Make walking outdoors part of your daily routine. Listen to what Mother Earth might be telling you.**



Editor:

S. Jeanne Wingenter, SSND (MK)  
[jwing1948@aol.com](mailto:jwing1948@aol.com)  
Layout Design & Photos:  
S. Gen Cassani, SSND (SL)  
[gcassani@ssnd-sl.org](mailto:gcassani@ssnd-sl.org)