



Ask The Beasts: Darwin And The God Of Love

With Elizabeth Johnson's book as our guide we will explore and deepen our understanding of God's love by looking to the beasts, birds, plants, and fish.

Chapter seven - All Creation Groaning

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- Richard Rohr

This is the season of fecundity – fruit and vegetables are ready to be savored straight from the land. Young beings of all sorts are birthed & growing...while Chapter 7 focuses on death. In reality life and death are always in season. Life and death are more kin than dichotomies, for as Johnson reminds us (along with Paul, Jesus and all of the natural world...) that life flows from death.

As a mom of a pre-schooler, what happens on the toilet is of significance – I get the detailed report on poo. As a gardener, it is not just that “Compost Happens” but that compost *matters!* It is this matter, this humus, that is one of the key life forces to growing anything. Matter matters. In these on-going processes, dying, transformation and living are happening. Compost contains millions of microbes, all living and working on the decay process to make way for more new life and ‘waste’ is not wasted. Resurrection is real.

More significant than accepting some purposefulness for death and knowing the interrelatedness of dying and living is God's place in suffering and death. In essence, God is near to all the enfleshed who suffer. Richard Rohr writes in *Dancing Standing Still: Healing the World from a Place of Prayer*, “The significance of Jesus' wounded body is his deliberate and conscious holding of the pain of the world and refusing to send it elsewhere...A naked, bleeding, wounded, crucified person is the most unlikely image for God. The cross of Jesus was a mirror held up to history, so we could utterly change our normal image of God (as Omnipotent.)” Instead, in delight and agony, we are accompanied by this incarnational, fleshy God who is no distant observer to suffering and death. A very-much alive Presence is with all who suffer pain, with the dying and all witnesses to death's sting. This God Presence is intimately near all beings whether the dying is part of the natural, spontaneous process of the first big bang as Johnson reflects on Darwinian observation or by the choices of humans.

The dwelling I claim as mine, ants also currently claim as theirs. As co-inhabitants, I have witnessed some profound moments of care when one ant carried another who was already dead (not by human doing) across a distance of 10'...we had a moment of mutual rest and on-looking at the dead ant. The living was aware of my presence but just looked at me and its companion for a long while before once again lifting this matter who mattered enough to carry all that way to other ant witnesses. Another time, I witnessed an ant coming to another injured one with such compassion. I felt as if it were communicating with such intensity to the

agonized one that this must be so painful, I don't want this but I am right here with you, encircling you.' Similarly, I trust in God's intensity and presence when any of us is suffering or dying.

As unstoppable and undesired as death is, death comes to each of us, in every species, and we ache. We ache at the death of loved ones and witnessing the destruction of one another. Yet we also look to God, trusting that God's presence will never leave us. Sometime we notice something of God and real life when we behold dying. We mimic this Presence as we mourn, light candles, and hope. We are sparks Divine Matter as we accompany one another and behold God dwelling with us in the wilderness.

Questions for reflection:

- Where in you living do you every-day resurrection?
- How does the idea of “deep incarnation” change your view of death and God being made flesh through Jesus?

