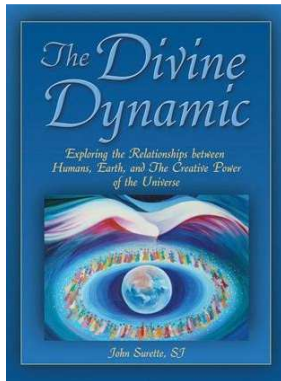


BOOK REVIEW

Surette, John. *The Divine Dynamic: Exploring the Relationships between Humans, Earth, and the Creative Power of the Universe*. Chicago: Acta, 2010.



John Surette is a Jesuit priest involved in eco-spirituality and eco-justice groups, including Spiritearth, of which he is co-founder. He worked for many years as a chemistry teacher, adult religious educator, and community organizer.

The Divine Dynamic is a book of reflections on the relationship between humans, the Earth, and the creative power of the Universe. The book is divided into nine chapters - The Promise of More, Mystics with a Small "M", The Immensities, Soul Size, Interface, The Cosmic Banquet, Eco-justice, Domains of Emergence, and The Planetary Human - each beginning with a general teaching on the particular subject, followed by a number of reflections suitable for individuals or for group gatherings. The reflections ask readers to delve more deeply into the subject as it impacts on their own journey. Surette uses down-to-earth examples, interesting metaphors and regular day-to-day objects to increase our awareness of the universe and to consider what we are doing to work in union with the creator to make the world better.

For example, the chapter on "The Cosmic Banquet" begins with a definition: this banquet is a celebration of existence, something familiar to primordial and indigenous peoples but often difficult for others. In order to participate fully we need, first, to sense "the beauty and terror as well as the interconnectedness of the Universe," Surette writes. That involves allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed by the mystery we find when looking into the eyes of other creatures and "entering into inter-subjective relationships with other life forms".

The first reflection in this chapter deals with the parable of the prodigal son. Surette draws attention to the possible effect on the son when his father refuses to allow him to enumerate his sins and ask for forgiveness. Being unable to let go of his list of sins might have interfered with the son's ability to appreciate the joy and love of his father and friends. Bringing the issue into our time, Surette suggests that the only way we can enjoy the banquet of justice, peace and love awaiting us is through awareness of God's unconditional love, "given to us regardless of what we have written on our lists".

Another reflection on "The Cosmic Banquet" addresses our call "to be nutritious and flavorful so that others can taste and see God in their experiences of us". One way to answer the call is to develop the virtue of respect. Surette writes that young people today use the term to mean "look at me, look beyond the surface, see my uniqueness". If we can learn to look beyond the surface to discover the beauty, mystery, and nobility of the Universe, we will provide nourishment and flavor for those we join at the cosmic banquet.

Adapted from

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