

## A Communion of Subjects

James Park Morton

The Rev. James Parks Morton is founder and president of The Interfaith Center of New York and was for 25 years Dean of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine, where he was instrumental in bringing the environment and interfaith movements into the center of religious dialogue and action. His environmental initiatives included the first Recycling Center on Manhattan's Upper West Side; the creation of annual New York institutions St. Francis Day and The Native American Thanksgiving, and the founding of the Joint Appeal of Science and Religion and the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, a group which has instilled over 50,000 congregations of every faith across America with the idea of sacred ecology and environmental responsibility.

For my dear green mentor, Tom Berry, on his 94<sup>th</sup>.  
 What follows is the composite punch line from my Fifth Annual Thomas Berry Award Lecture given on May 11, 2004 and delivered at The Interfaith Center in New York City :

I began my words with a simple acknowledgement that Tom led a pack of five environmental revolutionaries who between 1973-76 turned my intellectual life upside down: Tom, William Irwin Thompson, Rene Dubos, John Todd and Mary Catherine Bateson. Together, for a decade between 1976-1988, through over 100 sermons we made the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City the bully pulpit for the environmental crisis: thirteen sermons each by Tom and Bill Thompson; nine sermons each by John Todd and Greg Watson; eight sermons each by Chief Oren Lyons, Paul Gorman and Mary Catherine Bateson; seven by Rene Dubos; five sermons each by Maurice Strong, Amory Lovins, Jeff Gollhofer, and Paul and Julie Mankiewicz; three each by Carl Sagan, James Lovelock, Lynn Margulis and Chief Jake Swamp, plus double blockbusters by Al Gore, David Brower, Matthew Fox, Tulley Spotted Eagle Boy, Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, Fritz and Vivienne Hull, Gerry Piel, Lewis Thomas, and Buckminster Fuller!

Some green crowd of preachers with Tom Berry at the head!!

Let me close with my words from that night four years ago with Tom's three-fold charge from *The Great Work* which is also our charge for the rest of our 21<sup>st</sup> Century:

1. Our work is the great work of transition: from being a human presence of consumption motivated by financial profits, greed, that has led to the devastation of the planet to a human presence that is mutually beneficial to all members—human and nonhuman – of the total integral Earth community.
2. The Great Work will require a new jurisprudence to articulate the conditions for the integral functioning of all members of Earth and overcome the radical discontinuity between the human mode and the nonhuman mode in which only humans have rights. All members of Earth must have rights. The Great Work is a new understanding of Planet Earth and the Universe.
3. Wildness is the root of creativity and spontaneity. We will recover our sense of wonder and the sacred *only* if we experience the Universe itself as the primary sacred reality, the primal energy that re-

veals the numinous presence from which all things come into being. The entire Universe is comprised of subjects for communion not *objects* for exploitation. The single community of life (human and nonhuman) is the central issue of The Great Work. Therefore, our greatest discovery for the future will be human intimacy with all other modes of being which inspire art and reveal the numinous.

That is the Great Work before us. Thank you Tom on your 94<sup>th</sup>!!