

ORDER
of the
SACRED
EARTH

*An Intergenerational Vision
of Love and Action*

Matthew Fox | Skylar Wilson | Jennifer Berit Listug

Foreword by David Korten

***Dr. Zohara Hieronimus, D.H.L.,
featured as a chapter in this book***

REBELLION, DIVINE GRACE AND ENDURING LOVE

Zohara M. Hieronimus, D.H.L.

“It’s all of us together, or it’s all of us, together,” I often say with a chuckle. Aren’t we all archetypally guided by the same dream of paradise, our soul’s native home? Despite our thinking we are separate from each other, aren’t we unitary in our origin and purpose, born not for ourselves alone but for the world? The Order of the Sacred Earth celebrates these truths and its formation is literally the fulfillment of an experience I had in 1984. I share in profound gratitude this true story.

In 1957, as a three-year-old toddler, I committed my first of numerous acts of rebellion. I waded with forethought into the deeper waters of our family pool beyond the kiddie step while my parents and other adults were up the hill out of sight. “Come to the light,” said the voice I heard, which seemed to mean the shining sunlight on the waters above my head. But I could not right my body from its somersaulting underwater. Realizing I had made a fatal error in thinking I would be able to swim like the older kids around me, I was drowning. Suddenly though, I found myself above the pool in the arms of a beautiful woman as large as the oak trees, as enormous as the clouds, a woman cloaked in a cerulean blue robe and white trim, golden hair, and the pure emanation of love. She cradled me in her arms until I hit the ground on the side of the pool from the force of my mother’s saving motions. “Oh, she’ll be alright,” I heard her say,

reassuring everyone now gathered around me. Rebellion has its price and reward.

Seven years later, during my Jewish Sunday school's field trip to a local church to visit children our age, a boy and girl there asked me tauntingly, "Can you show us your horns?" As horrific as that experience was, my focus shifted to a beautiful statue I saw on a pedestal inside the church. This was the lady who had saved me from drowning. Discovering this was a revelation, and in that moment I became a heretic, a Jewish girl who secretly loved the Blessed Mother.

In 1969 I formally became an Earth guardian and social justice advocate when I handed out flyers for a program on acid rain given by Ralph Nader in South East Baltimore. Like so many other elders, I have led or been involved in numerous environmental, social justice, animal rights, and economic change campaigns since then.

In 1984 I founded what is now the oldest and longest freestanding outpatient holistic healing center in America, the Ruscombe Mansion Community Health Center in Baltimore, Maryland. After harvesting what would be the last fruits from a plum tree in the garden there, I had a waking engagement with an apparition that was standing by a century-old pine tree. There she was in stunning light. Dressed in white with a blue trim, her head covered by a flowing white cloth headdress. It was the Blessed Mother who had saved me decades earlier but whom I had not seen since then. Her manifestation in the material realm just 20 feet away from me was incredible. When she spoke her voice was clear, beautiful, precise, compelling, and as spirit behaves when she enters our lives, the Blessed Mother was swift coming and going. Looking directly in my heart, she said, "I want you to start the New Order of the World Mother" and then she was gone. I had no time to ask her, "What do you mean, what should I do, why me?" Adding humorously to the story today, "Besides, I'm Jewish!"

For years I tried to imagine what a New Order of the World Mother would do, who its members might be, how it could carry out activities in the world. I reasoned she meant to care for the Earth, to instill in our lives an “ethos of care,” something I learned telepathically from the animals I write about in *White Spirit Animals, Prophets of Change*. A society centered around the welfare of the mother, child, and natural world produces the healthiest and happiest communities. Anyone could join, I thought to myself, and any activity that was life-affirming and elevating could constitute the Order’s good works. I have tried to live my life personally fulfilling her request, but I never established the New Order of the World Mother as I was asked to do. It seemed an impossible task for a sensitive woman adversely affected by large crowds and who needs long stretches of solitude for good health.

When I received a print galley of *Order of the Sacred Earth* in preparation for interviewing Mathew Fox about Creation Spirituality on 21stCentury Radio®, I had an immediate recognition and recollection of my own calling. My husband and I have both been grateful to have interviewed Dr. Fox many times over the past 30 years on our new paradigm radio program, but this time was very special. I felt moved to thank Matthew for fulfilling the work the Blessed Mother instructed me to undertake so long ago. The Order of the Sacred Earth offers all of us the opportunity to unite our varied efforts wherever we live and experience the empowering connectedness we truly share.

The universe is reflexive, and like the prophets and prophetesses of prior centuries that I wrote two books about, cultivating courage, imagination and humility activates our soul-given talents. When we accept our roles as visionaries, co-creators, and Earth lovers, we become daring collaborators with each other and all of nature.

I know that divine grace is a power we can invite into our lives, and that we must do all that we can in honorable dedication to prepare the way, as

farmers do soil for seed. We are all rooted in paradise, craftsmen of noble souls and mortal bodies whose enabling energy comes from divinity's enduring love. This is what the Order of the Sacred Earth celebrates, to feel deeply interconnected in our planetary and personal destinies of service, galactic citizens in our local habitats, god-like beings destined to evolve together.

INTRODUCTION

Matthew Fox, Skylar Wilson & Jennifer Berit Listug

Humanity finds itself today in a complex situation where most Westernized people have been so heavily dominated and alienated by religion and patriarchal governance and a materialistic, consumer-driven, extractive capitalism that we have lost our active sense of the sacred living landscapes that we inhabit and that inhabit us.

We, Matthew Fox, a 76-year-old elder, activist, and spiritual theologian; along with Skylar Wilson, a 33-year-old wilderness and meditation guide who leads inter-cultural ceremonies, and Jennifer Berit Listug, a 28-year-old writer, spiritual leader, and publicist, are presenting a challenge and an opportunity in the vision we launch in this modest book. That vision is about an Order of the Sacred Earth.

In times like ours, so marked by apocalyptic goings-on, from climate change to climate change denial, to the failures of education, media, politics, economics, and religion, it is important that we not succumb to despair or to non-action or to reptilian brain action-reaction. We need to go deeper within our own souls and within the genius of our species to find anew what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called "the beloved community." Yes, we are witnessing the death of institutions and systems, and of the era that is not

erving us nor our Earth well any longer. We need to journey into this dying in order to break into new forms of community, religion, spirituality, and education that will give birth to deeper forms of living and interacting with one another and other beings on this small, intertwined planet. Nothing short of what David Korten is calling “A New Enlightenment” will suffice in activating the energies and insights now needed at this important time.

A death and resurrection is at hand. This might be expected in an apocalyptic time like ours, one where the “end time” of our modern era is fast receding and we reach for new visions. Apocalypse, after all, can also be translated as “Revelation.”

We feel that this short book provides a new vision, but one that has precedents in our Western, Eastern, and Indigenous histories. What we are proposing came to us in different ways as visions and dreams several years ago. It is about a new spiritual (not religious) Order. We say “not religious” because it will not be beholden to any religious headquarters nor to only one religious tradition. More and more people are open in our times to the many spiritual traditions and practices that sustain life, that teach us to drink in wisdom from the Earth herself.

Many of us are identifying ourselves at this time in history as “spiritual but not religious.” At the same time we believe it is possible for some people to be both spiritual and religious, but people must make an effort; all spirituality requires effort through presence, intention, and direct action. We include action because we are in a time when contemplation alone is insufficient in addressing the needs of our times and the more-than-human world. So our vision of a new order extends to those who call themselves spiritual but not religious, to those who identify as spiritual and religious, and also to those who may call themselves either agnostic or atheist and feel the creative potential to build a community vessel such as the Order of the Sacred Earth (OSE). What is at stake is not a particular religious or

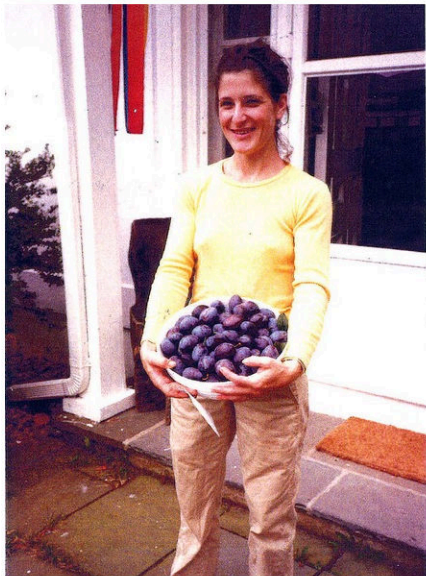
spiritual tradition but something much larger: the future of Mother Earth, and, therefore, the future of countless species including our own. All are endangered. Humans can and must make a difference.

The essence of the OSE is a common vow we all will take: “I promise to be the best lover and defender of the Earth that I can be.” This sacred pledge is a wisdom practice that we can continually refine and develop as we evolve. This vow will underscore the principles through which we operate and the values we strive to fulfill. To understand the power of taking this vow, we look toward another sacred commitment: The marriage vow. When one takes a vow to commit to another person, then one’s life begins to orient around this new union in ways one could not have planned for or imagined before. So we believe that by taking the vow to love and defend the Earth, your life will orient around ecological and social justice in ways previously unimaginable to you.

We are all beginners in this sacred work, both inner and outer. We are not here to judge one another but to support each other in our common efforts—efforts that include transforming ourselves beyond the anthropocentric consciousness we have all inherited from the modern era, as well as efforts to transform the institutions that buttress our culture whether we are talking about education, politics, economics, agriculture, religion, or relationships. Networking with other individuals and organizations doing similar work and bringing such activists together to develop a deeper spiritual grounding will be part of our shared work and what the OSE can offer. We can share in person, online, and in regional gatherings and perhaps in an annual gathering.

It is well known that many people in our time—especially the youth—have withdrawn from institutional religion. And yet, our inherent human need to connect with one another in a sacred and ritual container has not diminished. Nor, as Deepak Chopra has pointed out, has evil diminished on the planet because millions have walked out of church (or the syna-

gogue or the mosque). Evil, anything that would intentionally separate us from wholeness, continues to walk among us, and even to take on wings, it seems, with the current goings on in wars, refugees from war, poverty, and from climate change, extinction of species, calls to hatred and bigotry, and denial of scientific facts about the demise of the planet as we know it.



Zoh in 1984 holding the bowl of plums referenced in this story.



Zoh around age 10 with her pet goat, Maria.

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