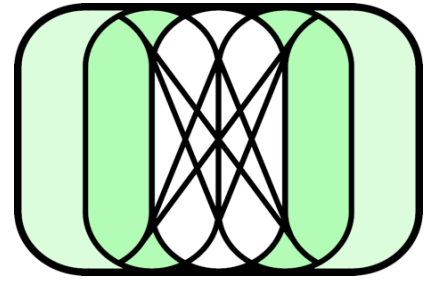


## Church of Creation

### Order of Service

Sunday, April 5, 2009 8:00 AM

*"Palm Sunday"*



#### **Welcome:**

You are always already chosen

**Hymn:** Blah-Blah

#### **Announcements and sharing**

Who were we fooling?...

#### **This week in Semiotics: Introduction to Coding**

#### **Lost In Space...**

Stars, Moon and Mercury

#### **Birthday acknowledgment:**

**Thomas Hobbes** (April 5, 1588 – December 4, 1679, aged 91)

English political philosopher

#### **Process: Glow...**

#### **Message:**

**Generating Compassion**

Dialogue on **Generating Compassion**

#### **Next week: April 12**

Resurrection, Renovation and Restoration

## Welcome:

**Welcome to the Church of Creation!** ‘Welcome’ is one of those everyday words mostly spoken and heard automatically. ‘Welcome’ comes to us from the Old English, *wilcuma*, which means, “Your arrival is in alignment with our choice.” This coming together and welcoming is an act of choosing. By welcoming you, we are communicating that you are always already chosen. You don’t have to do anything to be chosen; you already are. Thank you for Being.

There is also nothing to believe or disbelieve. This is a church without a creed or a code. Recognizing that believing or disbelieving may get in the way of living authentically, one of our practices is to suspend belief in favor of inquiries into the unknowable infinity of Being. Notice that I said suspend: you do not have to give up your beliefs. Your beliefs will still be available to you, if you want to take them up again. It is always your choice.

Inquiring into the unknowable produces distinctions that make a difference in one’s experience of life. We promise that an open inquiry will give you power over the matter in question.

The distinction between what and that is a basic example of a distinction. The what-it-is of something (its whatness) describes the properties of the thing: its weight and measure, its content and dimensions, how it shows up in consciousness. That-it-is, or thatness, is the ontological aspect of a subject: the fullness of its existence. While whatness is considered important, it is mostly a matter of preference or point-of-view. Thatness is crucial and primary. **What** you eat is important to your life and health. **That** you eat is crucial. This distinction shows up everywhere. Given the subject of church music, we could say that **what** you sing is merely important. What matters is **that** you are joyfully expressed. In our ongoing experiment on bringing aliveness to our music, we invite you to...

## **Announcements and Sharing:**

**Sharing what showed up this week inside of our conversation on “Who do we think we’re fooling?”**

What have you noticed?...

**Studies in the Church Charter**

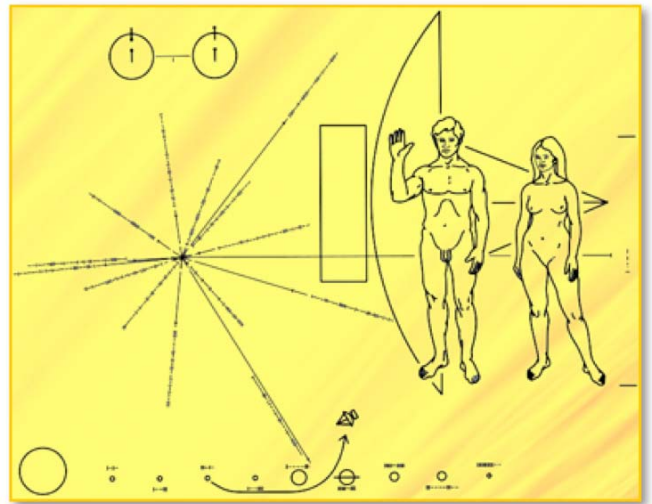
Semiotics is a general term for the theory of sign systems. It is an inquiry into the way human beings signify their world in language and derive meaning. Through the study of semiotics, we can see how sign systems are used by media, politics and popular culture to manipulate reactions and manufacture consent. It provides us with a valuable look behind the curtain, and insights into how it works and how it doesn't. Beyond what is merely important and interesting about semiotics, we find that language is the medium in which human beings create the Universe. Using language rigorously and precisely supports complete communications and the fulfillment of possibilities.

## This week in Semiotics: Introduction to Coding

In 1972 NASA sent an interstellar probe, dubbed *Pioneer 10*, into deep space. It bore a golden plaque. The art historian, Ernst Gombrich, wrote an insightful critique of this plaque:

“The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has equipped a deep-space probe with a pictorial message ‘on the off-chance that somewhere on the way it is intercepted by intelligent scientifically educated beings.’ It is unlikely that their effort was meant to be taken quite seriously, but what if we try? These beings would first of all have to be equipped with ‘receivers’ among their sense organs that respond to the same band of

electromagnetic waves as our eyes do. Even in that unlikely case they could not possibly get the message. Reading an image, like the reception of any other message, is dependent on prior knowledge of possibilities; we can only recognize what we know. Even the sight of the awkward naked figures in the illustration cannot be separated in our mind from our knowledge. We know that feet are for standing and eyes are for looking and we project this knowledge onto these configurations, which would look ‘like nothing on earth’ without this prior information. It is this information alone that enables us to separate the code from the message; we see which of the lines are intended as contours and which are intended as conventional modeling. Our ‘scientifically educated’ fellow creatures in space might be forgiven if they saw the figures as wire constructs with loose bits and pieces hovering weightlessly in between. Even if they deciphered this aspect of the code, what would they make of the woman’s right arm that tapers off like a flamingo’s neck and beak? The creatures are ‘drawn to scale against the outline of the spacecraft,’ but if the recipients are supposed to understand foreshortening, they might also expect to see perspective and conceive the craft as being further back, which would make the scale of the manikins minute. As for the fact that ‘the man has his right hand raised in greeting’ (the female of the species presumably being less outgoing), not even an earthly Chinese or Indian would be able to correctly interpret this gesture from his own repertory.



“The representation of humans is accompanied by a chart: a pattern of lines beside the figures standing for the 14 pulsars of the Milky Way, the whole being designed to locate the sun of our universe. A second drawing (how are they to know it is not part of the same chart?) ‘shows the earth and the other planets in relation to the sun and the path of Pioneer from earth and swinging past Jupiter.’ The trajectory, it will be noticed, is endowed with a directional arrowhead; it seems to have escaped the designers that this is a conventional symbol unknown to a race that never had the equivalent of bows and arrows.” (Gombrich 1974, 1982).

Gombrich’s commentary on this attempt at communication with alien beings highlights the importance of what semioticians call codes. The concept of the ‘code’ is fundamental in semiotics. While Saussure dealt only with the overall code of language, he did of course stress that signs are not meaningful in isolation, but only when they are interpreted in relation to each other. It was another linguistic structuralist, Roman Jakobson, who emphasized that the production and interpretation of texts depends upon the existence of codes or conventions for communication (Jakobson 1971). Since the meaning of a sign depends on the code within which it is situated, codes provide a framework within which signs make sense. Indeed, we cannot grant something the status of a sign if it does not function within a code.

The ever-present sky is, in a way, an overarching context for all that happens here on Earth. Reason would give us doubts that the stars could move us any more than we could move the stars, although it is possible. Even when astrological projections correlate with what is going on with our lives, it is useful to remember that correlation does not indicate causation, and whenever one considers a possibility to be the “Truth,” it becomes a lie. For us of course, it is just inspiring to look upward and see the Universe showing off. Our purpose here is to expand our awareness and explore all inquiries, and so we look outward from this planet to get...

### Lost In Space...



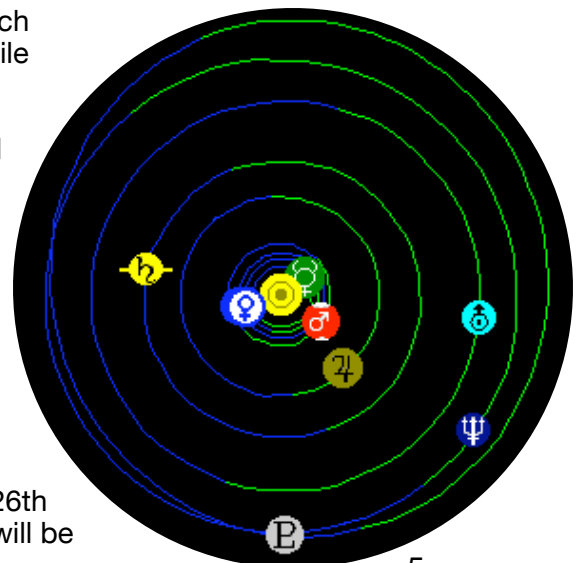
This week, **April 5<sup>th</sup> through April 11<sup>th</sup>**, we bring new essential actions into the spotlight and begin to produce the necessary elements to fulfill on our possibilities. We will look at where we are and what we are committed to accomplish. From here we can make choices and and share them, mid-week, as we talk to others around us about our projects and plans. We can begin to set a new pace to move our plans forward. The Full Moon on Thursday in the Aries/Libra sector provides a balance in the direction of our possibilities pulling us forward and generous, cooperative participation with others. The balance between our

own self interests and the harmony we create with the people we love leads to major shifts in our thoughts, decisions and expressions. In other words, the stars and planets are aligned to support us in what we are up to creating in the world. Seize the opportunities to experience, express and share yourself.

The full moon on Thursday is the Full Pink Moon - This name came from the herb, *moss pink*, or wild ground phlox, which is one of the earliest widespread flowers of the spring. Other names for this month's celestial light include the Full Sprouting Grass Moon, the Egg Moon, and among coastal Native American tribes the Full Fish Moon, because this was the time that the shad swam upstream to spawn.

If you've never seen the most elusive of all the naked eye planets, this could be the month. Mercury will be easier to find this month than any time this year. Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun, completing one trip around the Sun once every 88 Earth days. It rapidly changes its place with respect to the Sun as seen from Earth, and never gets very far away from it. When it's on one side of the Sun it is visible only for a couple weeks after sunset and when it's on the other side of the Sun it is visible only for a couple of weeks before sunrise, and it never gets very high above the horizon. We call it the pink planet because we always see it through our Earth's dusty and dirty, lower layers of atmosphere which makes it appear pink, although it really isn't; it's gray. It's also called the iron planet, with more iron in its core than our Earth

has. It is the smallest planet: only 3,000 miles wide, which makes it only a thousand miles bigger than our 2,000 mile wide Moon, and much smaller than our 8,000 mile wide Earth. Mercury is named for the ancient Roman messenger of the gods who had wings on his heels and was the fastest of all the gods and carried messages between them. The NASA spacecraft which has been visiting Mercury for the past few months is named Messenger and has been sending back some of the most spectacular pictures we've ever seen of this wonderful tiny world. It will be most visible April 10th to the 30th. Look west-northwest any night about 45 minutes after sunset. It will be at its brightest next week and will continue to climb higher and higher each night, reaching its greatest height above the horizon on Sunday the 26th. Although it won't be as bright on the 26th it will be very easy to find as a two day crescent Moon will be



seen just above it. Between Mercury and the Moon will be the Pleiades, the Seven Sisters. You can use the Moon and the Seven Sisters to find Mercury. On Monday the 27<sup>th</sup>, Mercury will be next to the Seven Sisters in a super close meeting; a perfect sight in binoculars. If you have a small telescope, you'll see Mercury grow in size and change its shape throughout the month. On the 15<sup>th</sup> it will look like a tiny  $\frac{3}{4}$  Moon and night after night it will grow in diameter but get skinnier in shape, eventually becoming a crescent. Begin your Mercury watch this week and see it climb higher and higher every night. On Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup> watch it form a wonderful trio with a crescent Moon and the Seven Sisters.

### **Birthday Acknowledgement: April 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Thomas Hobbes** (April 5, 1588 – December 4, 1679) was an English philosopher, remembered today for his work on political philosophy. His 1651 book *Leviathan* established the foundation for most of Western political philosophy from the perspective of social contract theory.

Hobbes also contributed to a diverse array of fields, including history, geometry, physics of gases, theology, ethics, general philosophy, and political science. His account of human nature as self-interested cooperation has proved to be an enduring theory in the field of philosophical anthropology.

#### **LEVIATHAN**

##### CHAPTER XIII OF THE NATURAL CONDITION OF MANKIND AS CONCERNING THEIR FELICITY AND MISERY

... So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory.

The first maketh men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. The first use violence, to make themselves masters of other men's persons, wives, children, and cattle; the second, to defend them; the third, for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name.

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man. For war consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time, wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of time is to be considered in the nature of war, as it is in the nature of weather. For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is peace.

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

....

*What do you suppose Hobbes would say about the effect of perpetual war on a society such as ours?*



## Process: **Glow...**

We are about to participate in a process. The process is a way to bring something that has not been experienced or experienced fully — or even something impossible to experience — into ordinary experience. There is nothing that you are supposed to get from it. There is no way that it is supposed to look. You get to experience what you experience and you get whatever you get.

Please position yourself comfortably, and close your eyes, if you would like to. Bring your awareness to your breathing and the words you are hearing. Allow your attention to your own thoughts to fade into the background. Create a rhythmic method for your breathing, inhaling through the nose, pausing after you inhale to allow the air to fully enliven your cells, then exhaling completely and pausing for a moment to consider the precious gift of air before receiving it gratefully, inhaling and smiling with joy.

As you breathe and smile, create for yourself the experience of bringing your consciousness to a still, small spot or speck behind your forehead. Rest for a moment in this still and silent, dark and comfortable space, breathing and smiling. Allow this point behind your forehead to begin to glow and shine with your love, and to begin to grow in size and take the shape of a glowing shimmering sphere. As you generate love from inside of this glowing sphere, the sphere grows in size and brightness. Create for yourself the experience of expanding your sphere to include your whole body in the warmth and power of your love. As the light from your sphere warms your body, all pain and tension in your muscles and joints disappear from your experience, and you now experience healing throughout your body. Now allow your glowing sphere to completely envelope your body, and it disappears into the sphere.

Breathing and smiling, continue to experience your consciousness as a growing, glowing sphere and allow it to grow to completely include your world, your environment and all that you are familiar with. As the light extends to touch the elements of your world, experience the Peace and tranquility that the light brings to your world. Experience your glowing sphere of consciousness to expand throughout the world, touching everyone and everything with your love and power. Now allow your sphere to envelope and consume the whole world as it disappears into your sphere.

Remembering to breathe and smile, allow your sphere of consciousness to continue to grow in size and brightness as you generate your love for all of creation. Allow yourself as your sphere to extend into all of the Universe, bringing completion and joy to the whole Universe. Experience your glowing consciousness as the whole creative power of the Universe.

Still breathing and smiling, feeling very comfortable, safe and relaxed, begin to experience creating your whole Universe from within your glowing sphere. Galaxies and stars and solar systems emerge — perfect — from your conscious sphere. As new creations come from your sphere, allow the sphere to become transparent, rather than smaller. Your sphere can maintain its ultimate size and power, and become transparent without being diminished in any way. Your world can emerge from your sphere of consciousness, as your sphere becomes more transparent.

When you have recreated your world and your environment, you may allow your body to emerge — perfect, whole, healthy, relaxed — as your glowing sphere becomes fully transparent. Experience your body, your world and your universe as existing within the transparent glow of who you are.

When you are ready to do so, please open your eyes.

## Message:

## Generating Compassion

Sunday, April 5, 2009

### Palm Sunday

According to the Christian church calendar, this Sunday commemorates the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, where later in the week, he'll be executed. If you can disregard the unimportant details of the story, such as whether or not it every really happened, or if Jesus was someone who actually lived, the story itself is inspiring.

#### Matthew 21

- 1 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,
- 2 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.
- 3 And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.
- 4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,
- 5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.
- 6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,
- 7 And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.
- 8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.
- 9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.
- 10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?
- 11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

Jesus comes into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, and is hailed as an important person, a King of the lineage of King David. The symbolism of riding on a donkey would be recognizable to the well-educated Rabbis of Jerusalem as the fulfillment of a prophecy written by Zechariah, about 500 years before, in the Hebrew scriptures. The use of the donkey would attract the attention of the religious fundamentalists who had a good game going, and would not be happy to see a Messiah. The mythic theme of this episode is the hero who willingly and compassionately gives up his body, his life and identity, for the salvation of humanity.

Jesus, the hero of the New Testament, who himself has no sense of separateness from God, seeks to bring the whole World into unification with the deity through his sacrifice. This is a model of compassion. It is ironic that the religion that names itself 'Christian' is noted for its long history of viciousness, violence, forced conversions, destruction of cultures, torture and execution of supposed heretics. Is it possible that the leaders of Christianity missed the point of their religion — that it was about compassion all along?

**Compassion** |kəm'pɑ sh ən| noun

sympathy and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others

ORIGIN Middle English: via Old French from ecclesiastical Latin *compassio(n-)*, from *compati* 'suffer with.'

**Suffer** |'sʌfər| verb [ trans. ]

1 experience or be subjected to (something bad or unpleasant)

- [ intrans. ] ( suffer from) be affected by or subject to (an illness or ailment)
- [ intrans. ] become or appear worse in quality
- [ intrans. ] *archaic* undergo martyrdom or execution.

2 *dated* tolerate

- allow (someone) to do something

ORIGIN Middle English : from Anglo-Norman French *suffrir*, from Latin *sufferre*, from *sub-* 'from below' + *ferre* 'to bear.'

The principle of compassion is inherent to all of the major religions of the World

### **The Ethic of Reciprocity**

The ethic of reciprocity (also known as the Golden Rule) is an ethical code that states one has a right to just treatment, and a responsibility to ensure justice for others. Reciprocity is arguably the most essential basis for the modern concept of human rights, though it has its critics.

A key element of the golden rule is that a person attempting to live by this rule treats all people, not just members of his or her in-group, with consideration. The golden rule has its roots in a wide range of world cultures, and is a standard which different cultures use to resolve conflicts. Principal philosophers and religious figures have stated it in different ways.

Today the most common English phrasing of the Golden Rule is “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” The “Do unto others” part first appeared in English in a Catholic Catechism probably in 1567, but certainly in the reprint of 1583.

**Matthew 7:12** “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

The Sage **Rabbi Hillel**, who died in 10 A.D., formulated the Golden Rule in order to illustrate the underlying principles of Jewish moral law: “That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn.”

The Golden Rule was a common principle in **ancient Greek** philosophy...

“Do not to your neighbor what you would take ill from him.” (**Pittacos**)

“Avoid doing what you would blame others for doing.” (**Thales**)

“What you wish your neighbors to be to you, such be also to them.” (**Pythagoras**)

“Do not do to others what would anger you if done to you by others.” (**Isocrates**)

“What you avoid suffering yourself seek not to impose on others.” (**Epictetus**)

“Never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself.” — **Confucius**, Analects XV.24

“All tremble at violence

Life is dear to all

Putting oneself in the place of another

One should neither kill nor cause another to kill.” — **Dhammapada**

### **Ecstasy**

Putting yourself in the other’s place requires getting outside of your own place. In Greek, this is ekstasis, out from where you’re standing, getting outside your own point-of-view to try on another. This is where we get the word ‘ecstasy.’ Do you want to experience ecstasy? Get out of your own way and put yourself in the place of the people who are around you: the ones you love, the ones who annoy you, the ones you want to hate.

The Challenge

We will be exploring ecstasy more completely in a couple of weeks. The challenge for this week is to take on Compassion as a practice. This is an ancient and religious practice that is not so common in our hectic and competitive society

### **Dialogue on Generating Compassion**

## Completion

### **Next week: April 12<sup>th</sup>**

Next Sunday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, is Easter Sunday, which in the Christian calendar, commemorates the supposed physical resurrection of the dead Jesus. If you can get past all the malarkey, this is a powerful metaphor suggesting an inspiring possibility for all of us. Join us next week for **Resurrection, Renovation and Restoration**, in which we explore our capacity to regenerate.