

*By Thich Nhat Hanh*

Dear Mother Earth,

EACH MORNING WHEN I WAKE UP you offer me twenty-four brand new hours to cherish and enjoy your beauty. Every miraculous life-form—the clear lake, the green pine, the pink cloud, the snow-capped mountaintop, the fragrant forest, the white crane, the golden deer, and the extraordinary caterpillar—each one has been born from you. So too has every brilliant mathematician, every skilled artisan, and gifted architect. And looking deeply I can see that it is *you* who are the greatest mathematician, *you* the most accomplished artisan, and *you* the most talented architect of all. A simple branch of cherry blossoms, the shell of a snail, or the wing of a bat—each bear witness to this amazing truth. It is my deep wish, dear Mother, to live in such a way that I am awake to each of your wonders, and nourished by your beauty. I cherish your precious creativity, and I smile to this gift of life.

We humans have talented artists, but how can our paintings compare to your masterpiece of the four seasons? How could we ever paint such a compelling dawn or create a more radiant dusk? We have great composers, but how can our music compare to your celestial harmony with the Sun and planets—or to the sound of the rising tide? We have great heroes and heroines who have endured wars, hardship, and dangerous voyages, but how can their bravery compare to your great forbearance and patience along your hazardous journey of eons? We have many great love stories, but who among us has love as immense as your own, embracing all beings without discrimination?

Dear Mother, you have given birth to countless buddhas, saints, and enlightened beings. Shakyamuni Buddha is a child of yours. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and yet he is also the Son of Man, a child of the Earth, your child. Mother Mary is also a Daughter of the Earth. The Prophet Mohammed is also your child. Moses is your child. So too are all the bodhisattvas. You are also mother to eminent thinkers and scientists who have made great discoveries, investigating and understanding not only our own solar system and Milky Way, but even the most distant galaxies. It is through these talented children that you are deepening your communication with the cosmos. Knowing that you have given birth to so many great beings, I know that you are not mere inert matter, but living spirit. You are yourself a great being, a bodhisattva. It is because you are endowed with the capacity of awakening that all your children are, too. Each one of us carries within us the seed of awakening, the ability to live in harmony and with your deepest wisdom—the wisdom of interbeing.

But there are times when we have not done so well. There are times when we have not loved you enough; times when we have forgotten your true nature; and times when we have discriminated and treated you as something other than ourself. There have even been times when, through ignorance and unskillfulness, we have underestimated, exploited, wounded and polluted you. That is why I make the deep vow today, with gratitude and love in my heart, to cherish and protect your beauty, and to embody your wondrous consciousness in my own life. I vow to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before me, to live with awakening and compassion, and so be worthy of calling myself your child.