"Remember (wo)man that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return."

Could these words be the key to tackling the ecological crisis? Could the ritualised remembrance of our earth-born frailty that marks the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday transform our relationship with our Common Home?

Dear reader, I am the ultimate example of upcycling — and so are you. We are stardust in a surprisingly literal sense — and that's not an exercise in self-aggrandisement. Every atom in our bodies used to be something or someone else. And every atom will be bequeathed, passed on, reused. We are tomorrow's mulch. Perhaps the road to sane relations with our Mother Earth is the befriending of this glorious truth.

The late Thich Nhat Hanh put it thus: “We often forget that the planet we are living on has given us all the elements that make up our bodies. The water in our flesh, our bones, and all the microscopic cells inside our bodies all come from the Earth and are part of the Earth. The Earth is not just the environment we live in. We are the Earth and we are always carrying her within us ... We need to recognise that the planet and the people on it are ultimately one and the same.”

(Love Letter to the Earth, pp.10-11)

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