



Faith in the Environment: The Religious Fight to Save Planet Earth

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“The hubris of human beings—that this is *all about me*,” Imam Saffet Abid Catovic protested solemnly. “We are a miniscule part of the universe.”

On a sunny June Sunday on the National Mall, four individuals representing Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and Native American faith teachings came together to probe the intersections of faith and environmentalism. This was “Ways of Knowing, Ways of Living: Exploring Faith and Conservation,” an interfaith panel at the 2022 Smithsonian Folklife Festival’s *Earth Optimism × Folklife* program and a preview of the 2023 program *Living Religion: Creative Encounters in the U.S.*

I am not religious, but much of what they shared felt approachable to me, and before long I found myself audibly *uh-huh*-ing from the audience.

“It’s not about plowing virgin territory,” Catovic continued. “Sorry, Captain James T. Kirk. It’s not about going where no one has gone before and disrupting everything else. No, it’s about following the pathways of those who came before us, who walked softly and humbly upon the earth.”

An Islamic prayer leader, Catovic invoked a perspective that he does not think is unique to his religion’s teachings: “God grant me beneficial knowledge that I will be able to act upon and benefit others.” Who are these “others” our actions should benefit? To Catovic, who believes all of life is interconnected, humans are accountable to the fish in the seas and the birds in the trees. “We’re accountable to *everything*.”

He’s not alone in this conviction. People of faith are getting involved in the sustainability movement—within their houses of worship, in global interfaith movements like [Greenfaith](#), and by advocating for policy changes. Finding solutions to environmental crises will require a new awareness of and concern for Earth, and the panelists believe that this can be evoked through sacred texts or wisdom teachings.

To read the remainder of the article, click on the following link: [Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage](#).