

Gathering to Honor Dr. John Gatta's *Green Gospel*

On Sunday the community will gather to celebrate Professor John Gatta's latest book, *Green Gospel: Foundations of Ecotheology* (Church Publishing). The event will be held at noon in Kennerly Hall at the Parish of St. Mark and St. Paul (formerly Otey). Refreshments will be served.

Dr. Gatta, who came to Sewanee in 2004, has long been interested in American environmental literature and how it intersects with religious faith. This latest work examines the contributions that Christianity can make to the environmental movement and to ensuring the preservation of the planet.

As Dr. Gatta sees it, humans, animals, plants, and the rest of creation are all part of an evolving spiritual process, and Christianity provides powerful tools to honor and contribute to that process. In the course of *Green Gospel*, Dr. Gatta takes issue with those who argue for "intelligent design"—as though there is a ready-made divine blueprint for creation—and says instead that humans, with their free will, should practice an "earth-hearted hope." What potentially awaits is beyond our ability to imagine, but the Bible provides guidance in how to work in conjunction with nature to honor that potential.

Dr. Gatta notes that the Bible is filled with visions of nature's divinity, beginning with Genesis, where God looked upon creation and saw that "it was good." Other books include *Song of Songs*, *Job*, and various psalms, including 96:11-12: "Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy."

At the same time, the Bible offers warnings about what can happen when humankind fails to honor God's creation. In other words, *Green Gospel* explores the havoc caused by sin in addition to the possibilities of a transfigured new creation. The book features illustrations of Sewanee landmarks by local artist Mary Priestley

Dr. Gatta came to Sewanee's English Department after having taught for years at the University of Connecticut. He is the author of five books, including *Making Nature Sacred* and *Spirits of Place in American Literary Culture*, both published by Oxford. He will be in attendance at the gathering for those who would like to talk to him about his ideas or have him sign their books.