

Manifestation

By Christine Loughlin, OP

A basket of candles gathered for Candlemas sits nearby. It is the eve of February first, the cross-quarter day between Winter Solstice and the Vernal Equinox. We are preparing to celebrate the ancient Celtic Festival of Fire, the feast of waxing light. What was born at the Winter Solstice begins to manifest. Though the ground is frozen the spring song of the titmouse can be heard in our yard. The sun grows stronger as days grow visibly longer. At Candlemas we gather to share the light of inspiration that will mature within each of us during the growing year.

In this emerging light of inspiration we are also preparing for the April 5th dialogue between Miriam MacGillis and Chet Raymo: "Connecting to the Wisdom of the Universe." In a reflective setting at Stonehill College, they will dialogue on the "new story" of creation in the context of science and faith.

Chet Raymo is professor of physics at Stonehill College, an astronomer, a naturalist who revels in the mysteries explored by science. From stones to stars, from quarks to quantum leaps in fact and faith, Chet ponders scientific discoveries. Each Monday we are all caught into his pondering made public in the Boston Globe.

Miriam MacGillis is a teacher, an artist, a Dominican Sister, and most specially, a farmer. Miriam founded Genesis Farm, a learning center for re-inhabiting the Earth, located in Blairstown, NJ. At Genesis Farm "the new story of creation," or new cosmology, is made tangible in the daily practices of people's participation in relearning what it means for the human community to live in harmony with the natural world.

In the terminal decade of the 20th century we are experiencing the cracking of institutional systems that have given shape and meaning to our lives. We sense that this cracking is indicative of a profound shift in the foundational story that has formed human consciousness. The choices, values, ethic, information that have brought us to this moment are not sufficient to shepherd us through "the narrow gate."

Our traditional understanding of life as ever renewing, seasonal cycles of life-death-life, has awakened to the know of the irreversible dimension of the universe. We must recognize ourselves within the dynamic of a greater story, not just in the context of human historical time, but in the billions of years of cosmological irreversible transformations. We must "connect to the wisdom of the universe."

This is a profound moment of inspiration. We sense the accumulated devastation of our Home place in the great cosmic unfolding. We experience not only the breaking down of the institutional systems but the disintegration of the very life systems that have emerged and sustain the marvelous planetary evolving. We recognize that all of us need the scientific understanding and the spiritual energy that will motivate us to respond. It is toward this manifestation that we offer the dialogue, "Connecting to the Wisdom of the Universe." In and through such reflection Crystal Spring grows in the daily practices necessary to live into an ecological age.

Whose Dream Are We Dreaming?

Cosmologists remind us of the three great questions of our time: Who are we? Where are we? And what are we to do? Our approach to these questions can have only two routes: empty the mind of wonder or participate in wonder down to the "seventh generation."

Emptying the mind of wonder is to tuck ourselves ever so securely under the blankets with More is better as the last story we hear before dropping off into a deep sleep. In this story we are urged to experience a sense of challenge and satisfaction through acquiring and consuming more. We dream more new gadgets dancing off our computers that we will ever be able to use before they are outmoded by one more upgrade we have to buy so that we're not "out of touch."

How ironic! Following this dream, we buy into a culture that is "out of touch" with the clearest approach that we and our children have into the depths of who we really are. We are urged to buy into "the-sky's-the-limit," a vision of human destiny toward limitless progress, as though there were no shoreline, no under-tow, no cost to our home place, the terrain which remembers our footprints, the paths of wonder we walked as children but have forgotten since.

This summer at Crystal Spring, children and adults will engage another dream, a primary one, "the dream of the Earth." Crystal Spring will sponsor a week-long intergenerational experience within the natural life of our community. Teacher-guides, along with children, will be learning our place as humans in the unfolding story of the universe. Each day's activities will engage a reflection of the on-going universe story from its flaring forth to the many birthday moments of our planetary life...star life, soil life, human life.

We plan to be outdoors (rain or shine!) exploring the living web to which we belong, becoming more sensitive, more "earth literate," creating a path of wonder and affection, remembering the story that the splendor of our region opens up to us in its forest, rocks, meadow, brook and gardens. Of course, no day will be complete without celebrating some particular phase of the Earth's dream: an interdependent life community, not separate from who we are but one which urges us to awaken with wonder to participate in our region's unique and ongoing revelation of the universe story.

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