

Learning the New Story Together

By Christine Loughlin, OP

Holiday season is the time for the best stories. Families, friends, and neighbors gather to celebrate their collective memory and familial belonging. Favorite stories are retold. It is the telling of stories that differentiates the human from other species. As our early ancestors noticed and were awed by the power and beauty that surrounded them, they pondered the Hidden Mystery that dreamed into existence such marvel and surprise. They created stories to explain to themselves the essence of this Mystery. We call these religious stories for they gave shape to the way peoples found meaning in their lives and guided their behavior in relating to the world.

The religious stories that have guided many cultures through the ages to the present are celebrated at the time of the “rebirth of the sun.” The Christmas narrative from the biblical-christian tradition that inspires hope and potential chronicles the story inherent in our tradition.

At the heart of the story is the capacity to see possibilities that are invisible. That capacity stirs our hearts and calls us each year to renewed commitment and compassion. But, as we celebrate the traditional seasonal festivals there is a collective stirring growing in the human psyche that begins to sense a promise of a radically new potential emerging.

We are in the 6th greatest extinction our planet has known. Some say the greatest extinction in 65 million years, other scientists say in two billion years. In terms of the oceans, the air, the biosphere we are altering all of them. We are in the midst of global experiment with Earth’s climate. What’s at stake are the systems that support life. A passing is occurring that is outside the forces of seasonal renewal. The living systems are shutting down. Why? Because one species in the community of life has forgotten that it has come the long journey with the whole evolving community of life. We humans have forgotten our past and placed a discontinuity between the non-human and human emergence into the Universe Story.

Earth is the primary community of origin. All the religious stories developed in a cultural setting of local experience and seasonal renewal. When the religious story no longer remembers and participates with the community of origin it is dysfunctional.

Earth is at a turning point in its evolutionary process. From a spiritual perspective, life has reached a point of breakthrough in the process of creation. Humankind is a *macrophase power* and is making the choice between life and death for the living systems of planet Earth. We are beyond the capacity of seasonal renewal to alter the imbalance and restore what is lost. We are at a moment of evolutionary transformation in the creation.

All the natural world is writhing in agony as we draw together in faith and festivals striving to recognize a potential that has lain hidden from the foundation of the world. All of the creatures of the natural world are attending to the rebirth of the human. They are literally dying that a potential that is yet invisible may emerge. Each day 142 species surrender in silence. No seasonal renewal can bring them back. All of life that awakened us into consciousness passes because our present perceptions deny the journey we have come.

The “great work” for all of us now is to integrate human affairs with Earth’s affairs. Human rituals must fold into cosmic order. The primary purpose of religious stories is to place ritual within the context of Earth’s great liturgical moments of developmental breakdown and breakthrough.

No one is exempt from this work. It will demand the hidden potential in everyone alive today. It is a work best done in community. Crystal Spring is a place to allow such potential to arise and take form to give shape to a new culture that will again place the human story with in Earth's story, the Universe Story. We are planetary pilgrims on our great journey of inner spiritual breakthrough into a *comprehensive compassion* where the human presence imagines and turns all Life toward on sacred community of Being.

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