

Wondrous Cosmic Order

By Christine Loughlin, OP

While we acknowledge Crystal Spring to be a “learning center” for an emerging cosmological story, there is a certain poise and buoyancy in our programs, from cooking to the arts to Earth literacy. When Earth Festivals arrive, our demeanor is more humble. Yet, no event draws more people than our Winter Solstice celebration. A hundred plus plod up the driveway, crowd into the candlelit oratory, and process out under the night sky to witness the lighting of the fire and the words of hope spoken by families, friends, companions in this “great turning.” What pleads such presence on this darkest night? Perhaps in our collective psyche we recognize that something is shifting, some profound new order is emerging and we humans are the species through which it is budding.

The terror of ancient peoples and the wisdom of past cultures unwittingly succumb to an air of sophistication in our ritual circle. Not only are we assured of the sun’s return and the season’s cyclic order, we can calculate the speed of the expansion of the universe and the distance we travel around our sun star. At the micro level we are able to identify all 20,000 plus genes in our human DNA and genetically modify those of plant and animal species. We have gained extraordinary control over nature and can translate the whole phenomena of living Earth into an abstract market economy to transfer wealth all around the world.

Our unprecedented industrial ingenuity has fooled us into thinking that constant growth is possible. We have come to believe that without ever expanding markets and world management, disaster will befall us.

The ancients stood on open plains and rocky ledges to dance, implore, conspire the sun’s return. Slowly we are awakening to what all previous cultures understood ~ cosmic order is cyclical. Day surrenders into night, summer relinquishes to autumn for winter’s dying back. Individuals, clans, communities, civilizations rise up, thrive, then come to their end. Wisdom resides in embracing this order and knowing one’s time and place in the cycle. To negate or deny the cyclic order is to invite a disorderliness that breeds violence.

Like all beings in nature, all things of human ingenuity and design must also come to an end. In these times we come to our Winter Solstice celebration as the keepers of “unfathomable information about the origin of our sun, the birth of our planet, and the innate functioning of its incredible bio-spiritual systems. Yet, the daily news reports of polar caps melting, sea levels rising, wetlands drained, fisheries depleted stirs an old memory. Our recent knowledge about our origin story awakens in us the memory of an intimate bond between our sun and Earth. The disasters that are befalling our home planet are caused by an industrial worldview with its fundamental belief that we humans are separate from the natural order.

Each year as we gather for the Winter Ritual a tangible acceptance that something is coming to an end is evident. While we accept personal and communal endings, the dying away of old ideas and standing traditions, we admit in our collective core that the values that have sustained our civilization are no longer the values guiding our choices. We are no longer denying the data from [Worldwatch Magazine](#) nor the fate of Earth recorded in [State of the World Report](#). Moving beyond our denial we dare to embrace the devastating facts. In the face of such tremendous losses, a zest for life appears, an enthusiasm for rebirth born out of the most amazing discovery that has ever unfolded in time. In the midst of our wild searching to know the secrets of outer space and inner being, we discovered that our Universe is a developing Reality. While previous

peoples understood a seasonal renewal in a cyclic order, we acknowledge a sequence of cosmic transformations that are irreversible. On the one plane, there are seasonal cycles that accompany us on our annual pilgrimage around our sun star. The awesome gift of our human presence is to embrace a new revelatory breakthrough. We live in a time-developmental world, not simply a world of seasonal renewal but an order of cosmic transformation. One mode of reality transitions into a more ecstatic Wholeness through catastrophic changes.

While our present knowledge of cosmic order surpasses the previous seasonal cyclic understanding, it is to the wisdom of the past that we must return. The peoples before us aligned human affairs with cosmic order. We are called to identify human power with the powers of the Universe. What may seem awkward in our initial efforts will vanish when we identify ourselves with the organic Whole. We are at the heart of creation. Transformation never happens in the abstract, but is embodied. We sense the creative role we are called upon to play. Courage is the act of placing ourselves in the service of that role.

As the cauldron is lit we will sing,

*Return to the darkness, return
this longest night of wonder
Return to the dream, return
this holy night to ponder...
Deep in the night turn to the light
Waken to Sun's ancient summons~*

*We who are born of a star
who then are we? (Carolyn McDade)*

The Universe comes to us with what it needs. With certainty we know we are born of a star. It is ours to find our way home to the great cosmic venture and become the new human being.

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