



Loretto Earth Network News

Hot Planet, Cold Facts—Now What?

Spring 2017

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Mother Earth is Weeping

By Maureen Fiedler SL

On January 20, 2017, Donald Trump was inaugurated President of the United States. And Mother Earth is weeping – profusely.

His election has already had negative implications for immigrants, Muslims, women, people of color ... but it is also a threat to the very future of our planet ... and life on earth.

Thanks to President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry, the United States signed on to the Paris Accords on Climate Change. Now, other participating nations are openly wondering if the United States, under a President Trump, will pull out of that accord, and undermine the efforts of the whole world to stem the tide of climate change.

This is HUGE.

Trump himself refuses to believe the conclusions of climate scientists, and has said explicitly that he does not accept the reality of climate change. And the Republican platform on which he was elected argues that climate change is not proven science — and that, in any event, “climate change is far from this nation’s most pressing national security issue.”

That same Republican platform champions environmentally disastrous

policies. It would end limits to carbon dioxide emissions, pull the U.S. out of the United Nations’ climate process, open protected forests to logging, and end all subsidies for renewable

climate change rules, cut staffing levels, close regional offices and permanently weaken the agency’s regulatory authority.”



energy. So much for encouraging, or subsidizing, solar and wind!

Trump’s choices for cabinet level positions which affect climate policy are equally disastrous. He has named Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency, and former Texas governor Rick Perry to be Secretary of Energy.

Indeed, there is fear that Trump might dismantle the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), set up by Republican President Richard Nixon in 1970. According to the New York Times of February 5th, Scott Pruitt “is drawing up plans to move forward on the president’s campaign promise to “get rid of” the agency he hopes to head. He has a blueprint to repeal

And Rick Perry as Energy Secretary? The New York Times reports that it was only after he was nominated to that post that he realized that “two-thirds of the agency’s annual \$30 billion budget is devoted to maintaining, refurbishing and keeping safe the nation’s nuclear stockpile.” He thought he would be a global ambassador for the U.S. oil and gas industries!

So, yes indeed ... Mother Earth is weeping as we begin the first weeks of the Trump Administration.

But it is up to us ... those of us who know that climate change is real and a mortal danger to our Planet ... to protest and act in any way we can to change these likely policies. It is up to us to promote renewable energy: solar, wind and geothermal.

We can start now by contacting our members of Congress regularly about climate issues. And we can plan to join a Climate March on April 29th.

The struggle will not be easy. But now... the future of our Planet depends on us.

Corrections:
Front Page of Winter 2016 Issue

First paragraph:— This should read as follows: An early catalyst that set us on the path of Earth consciousness was meeting Miriam Therese MacGillis OP, a principal interpreter of the work of Thomas Berry and co-founder of Genesis Farm. Genesis Farm, is a well-recognized and well-known Earth learning farm.

Third Column, second paragraph: Miriam introduced the assembled group to a book called *Saving Paradise*, written by two Unitarian women theologians. One of the women she referenced was Rita Nakashima Brock who is not a Unitarian but is a minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

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Editor's Note



Mary Ann Coyle SL

SURPRISE! I know I treated you to my goodbye in the last issue of LENNews but, alas, I simply couldn't say "So-long/Farewell" and that sort of thing. So I get to tempt you to read the current issue, and my feeling is that it really is my LAST!

Our lead article comes from Maureen Fiedler, our political guru. Please notice the graphic—it is worth a thousand words. And the final line is the real challenge to us all.

Very much in sync with the theme of this issue is the reflection by Loretto co-member Jessie Rathburn. Jessie and her husband, Andy, made the journey from Kentucky to Washington, D.C., to be present at the Women's March on January 22, 2017. On April 29 of this year we can participate in another March to protect our environment, demanding that all have access to clean air, water and healthy land.

You might say that this issue is built around a meditative theme. Ashley May, a teacher at Nerinx Hall, together with a group of friends traveled to Standing Rock at Thanksgiving. She eloquently describes how being with others at this sacred site caused her to re-evaluate her own values and the material possessions she holds close to her heart. We have also reprinted an article on non-violent resistance by Scott Wright. Scott gave us permission to reprint it from "A Matter of Spirit"—a publication of the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center.

In this same vein, those of you who have been at Loretto Motherhouse will recognize Elaine Prevallet SL, a retreat director and writer, who lives in the main cabin in the woods. You will love her reflection entitled "A Message From the Trees." You can actually almost see the sun set, and then see it separate as it encompasses, in sort of playful glee, the tree. Let your imagination be your guide.

Finally, Beth Blissman has pulled together the websites from a conference at Oberlin College entitled "After Fossil Fuels: The Next Economy." If technology grabs you, you can, at your bidding, with a touch of your computer, listen to and enjoy the ideas of a number of well-known environmental folks.

Several years ago I worked on editing a booklet that the Earth Network gave as a gift to graduates of our Loretto-sponsored-schools. I began my introduction using a quote from Harriet Tubman. It feels appropriate to quote it now. She said: "Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, the passion to reach for the stars, to change the world."

I closed my introduction with a quote from the Irish writer Diarmuid O'Murchu. "Keep your attention on learning to relate rightly: with the cosmos, with Earth, with all creatures inhabiting creation, and all will be well."

And so, I once again leave you as the editor of LENNews. I will miss this interaction with you but I do know it is time for me to put my red pencil in its case. Let's hope I don't SURPRISE you another time!



On April 29, 2017
The People's Climate Movement is marching again in Washington. We will resist attacks on the climate and on our communities. We will march for air, for water, for land. One idea can lead to a march; a march can lead to a movement; a movement can lead to real change.
Join us.

Women's March

A Reflection by Jessie Rathburn CoL

Andy and I reached Washington on the afternoon of January 21, 2017, while the inaugural parade was still slowly making its way to the White House. There was no line at the subway station; only three others shared our car. We walked to the National Mall that evening and watched as workers in hard hats took down the scaffolding in front of the Lincoln Memorial. It was quiet and still; a few pockets of people wandered past taking pictures.

The next morning, we started hearing chanting around 8:30 AM and looked out the windows to see streams of women and men in pink hats making their way through the streets. At 9:00 AM we were again in front of Lincoln Memorial though now surrounded by hundreds of others making their way to Independence and 3rd. The closest we ever got was Independence and 7th.

While we couldn't see the stage, we did have a large screen in front of us and massive speakers were set up just half a block away. We had no idea the crowd was filling in the entire street for over 10 blocks behind. Surrounded and unable to

move, we stood, listened, chanted, and prayed together for five hours. When marching finally commenced, it took us another hour to move half a block. We marched with thousands, continually recognizing all that connects us. We vowed not to choose one neighbor over another; to reach out in radical love and to stand together, knowing that when one is oppressed, no one is free.

The Women's March on Washington was not about a particular issue, but about a way of life. We marched to recognize and strengthen the ties that connect us. We marched to ensure full and healthy lives for all, free from violence. We marched to declare that inclusivity, dignity, equality and fair treatment must be afforded to every person. We marched for truth and transparency.

As stated in the Guiding Vision of the Women's March on Washington—*"We believe that every person and every community in our nation has the right to clean water, clean air, and access to and enjoyment of public lands. We believe that our environment and our climate must be protected, and that our land and natural*



resources cannot be exploited for corporate gain or greed—especially at the risk of public safety and health." Human freedoms are inextricably linked with care for and protection of Earth. Rhea Suh, President of the National Resources Defense Council, reminded us that in standing together in solidarity we are calling for future generations to inherit a world in which a healthy environment is a basic right for all, regardless of income, skin color, or geographic location. This is a world where tribal rights are placed before polluters' rights. Our natural world belongs to no individual. Clean water has no political party, and clean air will not be owned by a corporation.

In Flint, Michigan, many still do not have access to clean water. So we march for those in Flint. We march for those who are even now camped out in Standing Rock. We are not helpless, and we will use our voices tirelessly until everyone is assured of these rights.

Reflection from Standing Rock

By Ashley May, Nerinx Hall Faculty

Thanksgiving morning some several hundred people stood circled near the water, sending prayers up to police standing atop a hill. “We love you!” some shouted. Songs in indigenous languages were sung. Hands were clasped between native and non-native supporters alike. Several dozen police looked down at us all. The hill on which they were standing is called Turtle Island, a sacred burial ground of the Sioux. Police were blocking anyone from disrupting ongoing excavation just beyond them, where contractors were laying the North Dakota Access Pipeline. Police announced through loud speakers that they would not tolerate anyone coming closer, that such an action would be considered aggression. I wondered if they could comprehend the irony of their words or grasp the paradox that brought us all here.

The water surrounding Turtle Island is a tributary of the Missouri River, one that is known for the spherical rock formations that lined its banks. The Sioux Indians refer to the round rocks as Sacred Stones. The white settlers who colonized the area, on the other hand, referred to them as cannonballs. Our maps today call this tributary the Cannonball River. It felt hard for me to believe as I stood there at the base of the burial grounds that the split in understanding could be reconciled by the protestors’ direct action that day.

A perception that the same piece of earth at once to some is sacred and to others is a weapon is the root of the problem that created the standoff.

Two evenings prior, our six-person delegation arrived at Oceti Sakowin camp with the support of the Loretto Earth Network and Nerinx Hall community. We were graciously invited to join the campgrounds of a family of Miniconjou Indians, a subdivision of the Lakota people. There we quickly learned the Seven Lakota Values that are expected and alive at camp: Prayer, Respect, Compassion, Honesty, Generosity, Humility and Wisdom. We were reminded that we were called to show up at camp in a way that was guided not by ego but by spirit. To act in the “right way” was to recognize our interdependence to each other as humans and our interconnectedness with Earth.

Oceti Sakowin is a place of ceremony and prayer where interconnectedness is celebrated constantly. Even walking is prayer. Organizers reminded us that each step we take is communication with and its quality should reflect the reverence we have for Mother Earth. I imagined those who called the spherical rocks in the river “cannonballs” would have found this difficult to understand. In Native Spirituality there is no other time and place but here and now to worship



and live in harmony with all of God’s creation. The Kingdom of God, or perhaps the *Kin*-dom of Great Spirit, is Earth, rather than as a glorious place far above our heads, to be revealed when this life is over.

The reverence and commitment to nonviolence I witnessed at Oceti Sakowin this past November, and in the events that followed, tell me it is now (as members of the *Kin*-dom) that we are called to be more generous than ever, to gather in community and be good to one another, and in doing so, to lift each other up in choosing laughter over anguish, joy over distrust.

That Thanksgiving morning, I had a feeling that right at the place of division, between the two interpretations of our relationship with Earth, I was standing in the “tragic gap.” The tragic gap is the place that the great thinker Parker J. Palmer calls the “gap between the hard realities around us and what we *know* is possible.” Today as I reflect on President Trump’s action taken to expedite the pipeline’s completion, I feel like I am swimming in the tragic gap, alternating between treading and floating so that I don’t have to cling to the shore of cynicism on one side or the shore of irrelevant idealism on the other. With a steadfast heart, I seek to stay in the center, where the Hopi prayer asks us to keep our head above water, hopefully in a river that is healthy and clean.



Transforming Creation through

Nonviolent Resistance

By Scott Wright

We live in a world radiant with beauty and one that is also crying out for redemption. The entire Creation is filled with the colors of the seasons of Creation; at the same time it is groaning under the impact of climate change: extreme weather events, devastating floods and severe droughts, rising sea levels and melting glaciers, disappearing habitats and disappearing species of life. But this drama is not confined to the impact of climate change alone. Transnational mining companies, oil pipelines and hydroelectric dams that provide electricity for their mining ventures, are ravishing the lands and polluting the waters, and Indigenous communities across the Americas are making a stand to protect Creation.

History is filled with inspiring examples of nonviolent resistance, from Gandhi's independence struggle in India to Martin Luther King's struggle for civil rights and Cesar Chavez's struggle for farmworker justice in the United States.

But something new is happening here. The stakes — the fate of the Earth and future generation — are higher and the protagonists are new, with Indigenous communities and women playing a crucial role, and the spirituality of nonviolence is deeper and more holistic — rooted in the gift of Creation.

Pope Francis pointed to these emerging “signs of the time” when he adopted the name Francis, and pointed to what would become his commitment to poor and Indigenous peoples, to peace and nonviolence, and to protecting all of Creation.

One of the more remarkable nonviolent struggles in recent years came to light when a young

Indigenous leader and mother of four children was assassinated in La Esperanza, Honduras. On the night of March 2, 2016, Honduran environmental and Indigenous leader Berta Cáceres was brutally murdered in her home. As co-founder of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), Berta had led the Lenca people and other Indigenous communities in a non-violent struggle for the integrity of their territories and their sovereignty.

For years, Berta and the Lenca communities courageously fought to block the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project which would create a series of dams, flood large areas of land, and cut off the supply of water, food and medicine to the Lenca peoples. In addition, this project violated the sovereignty and the rights of indigenous people to decide whether such mega-projects would be undertaken at all. Berta was persecuted and received numerous death threats for her work to defend the sacred rivers, forests and lands from further desecration. Since the military coup in Honduras in 2009, more than 150 land and environmental activists have been assassinated, and hundreds of mining concessions have been offered to trans-national mining companies, many of them tied to hydroelectric dams to generate the electricity required by their operations.

What does this mean, then, for the future of Berta's people, and the future of her land? Is nonviolent resistance an effective means to create peace, democracy and sustainability? Surely the Lenca people have been faithful to their Indigenous values and spirituality, rooted in a reverence for Creation. Surely they have and continue to pay a high cost. They



Berta Cáceres with Fr. Ismael Moreno, SJ

have been faithful yet people often ask, have they been effective? Does their nonviolent resistance offer any hope? I would answer “Yes,” and here are three reasons why.

First, because the stakes are so high, and the fate of the Earth and of future generations hang in the balance, the witness of Berta Cáceres and the nonviolent resistance of the Lenca community has had a profound impact throughout the world. This is due, in part, because Berta was so well-known. She was the recipient of the Goldman Prize for environmental activists, and a personal invitee of Pope Francis to the World Meeting of Popular Movements in Rome in 2015.

A case could be made that Berta was a *Laudato Si'* martyr in a long line of martyrs defending the Earth. Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* is just one sign of the impact that Indigenous communities defending Creation has had on the Church and on the world, but there are many more. Three years ago, the Catholic Church in Latin America formed the Church and Mining Network to defend the Indigenous peoples and the natural resources of the continent. In like manner, the Pan-Amazonic Church Network (REPAM) was formed to defend the Amazon region and has since spread to the Congo Basin in Africa and to Asia as well.

Second, nonviolent resistance is effective and hopeful because people are listening to Indigenous peoples and to women as the protectors of

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the land and the water, and waking up to hear “the cry of the Earth” and the “cry of the poor.” Berta, the Lenca people and countless Indigenous peoples around the world are the first defenders and the last protectors of Creation. If we don’t listen to them, the future is dismal. But people are listening and beginning to take seriously the fate of the planet and the fate of present and future generations. Many have had, thanks to social media, the good fortune to hear Berta’s voice.

At the 2015 Goldman Prize awards ceremony in San Francisco, Berta spoke briefly and eloquently. For me, her words evoked memories of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech and Archbishop Oscar Romero’s “In the name of God, stop the repression” homily, both given on the eve of their assassinations and martyrdoms. Like them, Berta sealed her fate with words of hope and defiance in her acceptance speech that night:

“Let us wake up! Let us wake up, humanity! We’re out of time. We must shake our conscience free of the rapacious capitalism, racism, and patriarchy that will only assure our own self-destruction. The Gualcarque River has called upon us, as have other gravely threatened rivers. We must answer their call. Our Mother Earth — militarized, fenced-in, poisoned, a place where basic rights are systematically violated — demands that we take action. Let us build societies that are able to coexist in a dignified way, in a way that protects life.”

A new spirituality of nonviolence is emerging, one that is deeply tied to the fate of the Earth and the gift of

Creation, and that is a third reason why the nonviolent resistance of Indigenous communities like the Lenca people protecting Creation is effective and hopeful. We can see that closer to home, in the gathering of Native Americans at Standing Rock, North Dakota. We know, if we do not listen and respond with solidarity, the fate not only of Native Americans but of the lands and waters of our native land are at stake.

Our spiritual traditions are deeply enriched by the spirituality of Indigenous peoples rooted in the gift of Creation. As Christians, we know that the joy of Easter is the victory of Christ over death, and that life, not death, will have the last word. But even as we anticipate and eventually celebrate the joy of Easter, the passion of Earth and the passion of the poor continue in the drama of these nonviolent struggles of Indigenous peoples for life and for all of Creation. In this “in-between” time, it truly is “a matter of the Spirit,” and we pray to the Spirit that unites us all and binds us to Creation: “Come Holy Spirit, and renew the face of Earth.”

• *Scott Wright is the director of the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach (CCAO), the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation office of the U.S. region of the Missionary Society of St. Columban. He was the co-coordinator of the Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA) and a friend of Berta Cáceres since 1999 when she served on the board.*

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Words of Thomas Berry
“The Great Work”

The Great Work before us...
is not a role we have chosen.

It is a role given to us,
beyond any consultation
with ourselves...

We are, as it were,
thrown into existence with
a challenge and
a role that is beyond any
personal choice...

Yet we must believe that
those powers that assign
our role must in that same
act bestow upon us the
ability to fulfill that role.

We must believe
that we are cared for and
guided by these same
powers that bring us into
being.

**Let us wake up! Let us wake up, humanity! We’re out of time.
We must shake our conscience free of the rapacious capitalism,
racism, and patriarchy that will only assure our self-destruction.**

After Fossil Fuels: The Next Economy

By *Beth Blissman CoL*

In October 2016, I was fortunate enough to attend a conference sponsored by Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. Just to whet your interest — David Orr, Bill McKibben, Paul Sears were among the many present. I am going to provide the websites so that you can enjoy the interaction of these folks as much as I did.

The conference website is:

<http://new.oberlin.edu/events-activities/after-fossil-fuels/index.dot>

You can access links here to access the archive of the live stream of the conference, view pictures and presentations slides, and find more information about conference partners.

A fine overview of the entire event is provided by David Orr, Paul Sears Distinguished Professor of Environmental Studies, at the very start of Session 3 – Agenda for the Next Economy Pt. 1, at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RF3vrqfnsXU&t=448s&list=PLT5vOXI-AasQTyGUXacrYWHIZNHZfTFms&index=3>

If you are a fan of Bill McKibben, you can hear his keynote as the bulk of Session 2 - The Hottest Fight in the Hottest Year, at this link:

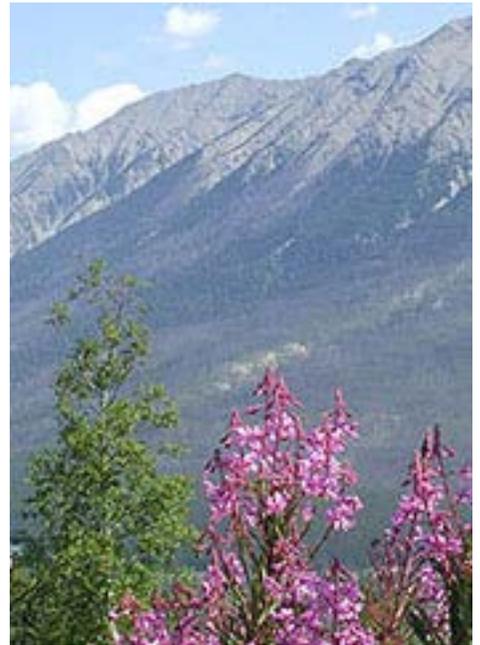
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7DC9zjORjs&list=PLT5vOXI-AasQTyGUXacrYWHIZNHZfTFms&index=2>

Also, the Conversation among Arnold Schwarzenegger, 38th Governor of California; Schwarzenegger Institute for State and Global Policy and Tom Steyer, NextGen Climate, moderated by Michael Duffy of Time Magazine, was quite interesting. You can find it as part of Session 6 – The Politics of Transition, if you scroll ahead in the following video to about the 2:20 mark:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyTWghLycYQ&index=6&list=PLT5vOXI-AasQTyGUXacrYWHIZNHZfTFms>

In sum, the conference brought together many people working on both challenges and solutions, yet it was limited to a primarily academic audience. It would have been greatly enriched with more grassroots involvement and dialogue, yet it offers hopeful solutions and pertinent questions for our time — I highly recommend checking it out!

Beth Blissman, Ph.D., has been a Loretto Community co-member since 1995 and has served on the LEN coordinating committee since 2000. She directed the Bonner Center for Service & Learning at Oberlin College from 2000-2016, and now serves as the Loretto Community representative at the United Nations.



Rachel Carson

In Her Own Words

Those who dwell among

the beauties and
mysteries of Earth

are never alone
or weary of life.

Upcoming Event:

Water Justice: A Global Theological Conference, featuring Barbara Boxer, Maude Barlow and others, will take place March 22-24, 2017. The conference will take place in New York City at Trinity Institute, yet will also be webcast worldwide. Interested attendees can become a Partner Site, or find the Partner Site nearest you, at TI2017.org. From Flint to Standing Rock, many of today's most pressing social concerns revolve around water. Join faith communities worldwide to help.

A Message from the Trees

By Elaine Prevallet SL

Some winter evenings, as I look out my window, I see Earth positioning itself so that the sun is “setting” behind the bare, dull brown/gray trunks of leafless trees. For a while, the sun appears on either side of the tree, but suddenly, when it hits dead-middle, the sun completely envelops it, and the tree becomes the sun, fully enflamed, completely illuminated, standing like a brilliant beacon. Could this be an image of what Jesus meant when he invited his followers to become “the light of the world”? Or Paul, when he wrote that we “were once darkness but now we have become light”? Can we be such pillars of light?

What do we mean when we say “I see?” I often reflect on the story of a Frenchman named Jacques Lusseyran. Though blind from the age of 8, he developed a capacity for sight of another kind. When he was walking with his friend, he could say, “There’s a mountain over there to our right,” or “There’s a tree up ahead here.” He felt objects as a kind of pressure, or vibration: the trees or rocks would come toward him, “They printed their shape upon me like fingers leaving their impression on wax,” he said. He had the role of interviewing candidates for the French resistance movement during World War II because he was nearly infallible in discerning when someone was lying or dissembling. He totally trusted that inner knowing. Sadly, in one interview, with a very highly recommended candidate, he set aside his own inner conviction, and accepted the man. And he was betrayed. Happily, he survived Auschwitz and lived to share his wisdom.



Lusseyran believed that eye-sight is only one way of seeing, and perhaps the least useful, because our eyes pass over things, he said, they only skim the surfaces. The real knowing is deep within.

But such “inner seeing” had its demands: he had to be inwardly quiet, empty of curiosity, doubt, pride, fear. Only then could he know a “constantly present creation” taking place. What he learned was that there is an inner knowing that opened when he was internally free and attentive. Inner emptiness seems to morph into a deeper receptivity, the capacity to see through the outer layer, to recognize the Light Within. The emptiness is not a vacuum, it is a space of deep recep-

tivity, and what comes in through our pores is an enormous, open love, wonder, awe – the Divine Love pouring itself out into creation. Into us. To be shared with the world around us.

Often we simply walk through life blinded, filled with our own importance or uselessness, willfulness, or frustration or preoccupation with our own trivial concerns. Poet Mary Oliver expresses it beautifully: she writes that light flows from the branches of trees, and they call to us to “stay awhile,” to “go easy, to be filled with light, and to shine.” Her advice is “never to hurry through the world,” but to “walk slowly, and bow often” — a good formula for becoming inwardly attentive, receptive to the Divine shining in and through this marvelous creation, quiet enough to sense the Gift of Life pulsing through our pores.

We humans are energy, we too can shine. When we are quietly open to the world around us, we may be aware of a mysterious depth of energy: we are, at this moment, the light of God creating. We ourselves – unknown to ourselves (that’s important) – can become, like the trees, beacons brilliant as the sun, radiating Divine Love throughout the creation.

What in my practice or my prayer helps me to reach that quiet inner space? What helps me to become free from preoccupations that clog the inner screen?

Notes: Mary Oliver *Thirst* Boston:Beacon Press 2006, p.4
Jacques Lusseyran *And There Was Light* MorNing Light Press 1963