Celebration everywhere, wild and riotous! Immense as a monsoon drenching us with delight. Celebration that is the Universe Itself!

These words of Thomas Berry, put to music and sung in beautiful harmonies by Anima and Fyre and Lightening Consort, opened our 20th anniversary celebration of the co-founding of Green Mountain Monastery with Thomas Berry on June 1, 2019, marking also the 10th anniversary of his passing.

Imagine walking into our Great Room filled with over 150 people all gathered for what would become an unforgettable upsweep experience of the universe story in color, music and movement.

Once seated, you may have noticed the four brown pieces of cloth covering several of the windows around the space. This is not a guarantee however, because the brown linen material blended in so well with the heavy beams and dark barn wood of the Great Room.

In any case, it would have come as a huge surprise to you, as it did for many others, when after listening to several inspiring musical pieces the first brown linen cloth was unveiled to reveal a blast of luminous red and orange color depicting the first of four Cosmic Stained Glass Windows, The Primal Flaring Forth of the Universe, by glass artist Amber Hiscott from Wales.

Commissioned by us in 2012, it took Amber 6 years to design and complete these windows working with the ancient technique of mouth-blown glass used in the great windows of the Medieval Cathedrals during the middle ages.

Amber chose this method as the most elevated way to express the cosmology of Thomas Berry and four great moments in the universe story – The Primal Flaring Forth, Birth of Galaxies and Stars, Emergence of Life on Earth and Our Ecozoic Future.

These windows in addition to telling the story of the Universe are also made from the actual elements of the story they tell!

In creating mouth-blown glass, three elements from Earth’s crust – Silica, Calcium Carbonate and Sodium (gifts of our supernova explosion and molten activity of early Earth) – are placed in a bubbling vat of extreme heat called ‘the furnace’. Through gravity and centrifugal force, the glass is gathered at the end of a blow pipe in the shape of a red hot balloon. Air is blown into the glass to create air bubbles breathing the glass to life.
The tenth anniversary of Thomas Berry’s death was observed in many ways. Green Mountain Monastery, which he co-founded with Sisters Gail Worcelo and Bernadette Bostwick, generated a joyous event full of music and art. “The Living Legacy of Thomas Berry (TB-19),” hosted by the Center for Ecozoic Studies in his home region around Greensboro, NC, featured intimate conversation in which we shared appreciation for the way he lived among us, the personal traits that were so endearing. Both gatherings – the first attended by Beth Blissman and the second by your editor -- reinforced the spiritual roots of the Loretto Earth Network.

In this issue, Beth and Gail both offer reflections of the GMM event. I asked Morgan Glover, who sensitively facilitated an early conversation circle I attended, to do the honors for “The Living Legacy of Thomas Berry (TB-19),” by offering her unique window on the arts and mystery of evoking Earth wisdom. Morgan’s work is an important window on releasing old ways and explores new practices in our journey to “read” the language of Earth and learn her ways. In addition, with Herman Greene’s kind consent, I include his summary in The Ecozoic Reader of Thomas’ 1979 essay, “The Spirituality of Earth.” Children play within the embrace of Earth on learning excursions to Plowshares Farm in Kentucky near the Loretto Motherhouse. There, Bob Ernst, one of our newest LEN co-coordinators, lives out The Dream of the Earth. His meditation on the realities of the predator/prey relationship on the ground on the farm anchors this issue. It reminds your editor of the ninth of Thomas’ “Ten Principles of Jurisprudence.”

And emerging from The Universe Story and The Great Work, with Pope Francis we have recognized the Cry of the Poor as the Cry of the Earth. Celeste Rossmiller takes us on a tour of the recent conference at Creighton University celebrating Laudato Si.

Our next issue will honor the life and ministry of our former editor, Mary Ann Coyle, SL, who slipped away to watch for us at the pearly gates on June 15, 2019. As she would always write, we eagerly look forward to your comments and feedback on LEN News.
A Double Anniversary at Green Mountain Monastery

By Beth Blissman, CoL

The weekend of June 1, 2019, marked at least two significant events. It was the 20th anniversary of the founding of Green Mountain Monastery (GMM), and it was also the 10th anniversary of the passing of one of the GMM co-founders, Fr. Thomas Berry. The other two co-Founders, Sisters Gail Worcelo and Bernadette Bostwick, along with Sisters Amie and Kris, welcomed over 150 visitors to GMM for a weekend of celebration and remembrance.

We gathered on Friday evening on Hillcrest Road in North Greensboro, VT, starting with a walk through the Art Tent. There we viewed a wonderful exhibit – curated by Sr. Bernadette – from the work of female artists who have been touched by both the beauty and plight of Earth. As the sun began to set, Sr. Gail walked us through the history of GMM, complete with many vintage photos. We ended the evening with socializing and a reception.

One of the pieces of the celebration that I appreciated the most was the Saturday morning presentation by Lauren Sopher, a recent graduate of the University of Vermont. She participated in the Field Naturalist and Ecological Planning masters degree program, and told an inspiring story of community-engaged research. Lauren shared a PowerPoint entitled “Introduction to our Land and Bioregion.” It described how she and several of her colleagues lived at GMM during the summer of 2017 and mapped the topography, tracking the wildlife and reading the landscape. They discovered that there is a northern white Cedar Swamp on the GMM property, as well as a lowland spruce-fir forest, with plenty of amazing birds migrating through. They identified several areas of future research and provided essential information for GMM to prepare a conservation easement.

Several years ago Sisters Gail and Bernadette had shared with the Greensboro Land Trust (GLT) that they would like to conserve most of the 157-acre property they acquired in 2003. In 2018, the GLT prepared an application to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), which is funded by the state legislature. The Vermont chapter of The Nature Conservancy agreed to participate as a co-holding partner, and we hope that the project will be approved by the VHCB board in this summer!

This part of the weekend was especially gratifying, as the Loretto Earth Network had been an early supporter of GMM and arranged to have the Loretto Community offer GMM an interest-free loan to purchase the Greensboro property. Hearing that most of the land would be preserved in perpetuity as part of a network of nearly 20 other properties in Greensboro made my heart sing.

After Lauren’s informative talk, she led us on a forest walk along some of GMM’s 1.3-mile network of hiking trails that are open to the public.

On Saturday afternoon, after the concert and unveiling of stained glass windows described in Sr. Gail’s article, she and Sisters Bernadette and Amie gave out the first-ever “Thomas Berry Awards for Selfless Service” to several key figures in GMM’s successful sprouting and growth: Betsy Ungvarskey, Bengt Ohman and Clive Gray. On Saturday evening guests enjoyed walking the trails and making new friends.

As we wrapped up the celebration, we expressed gratitude for this joyous gathering celebrating the beating heart of the Universe.

We need to know how to participate creatively in the wilderness of the world about us. For it is out of the wild depths of the Universe and of our own being that the greater vision must come. Artists have something in them that is wild, something guided by imagination ...... in color, music and movement.

Thomas Berry, from the paper entitled “The Wild and Sacred”
In “The Brady Tarot,” the illustrator depicts The Empress archetype as a red wolf mother with her nursing pups. Around her are two black-tailed rabbits and a doe, traditional symbols of fertility and femininity.

This version of The Empress is one of my favorite cards in the deck, and it’s especially poignant given the ecological regeneration that has occurred in some places in the U.S. after the reintroduction of the keystone species.

Although Tarot has a history of being used for fortune-telling and occult teachings, many contemporary readers use the cards for “sacred play,” reflection, healing and personal development. I’ve been exploring the system as a potential container of ecological wisdom, a type of mystery tradition for the 21st century. “The Brady Tarot,” which features flora and fauna of North America, “is a testimony to biodiversity and a call to protect it,” according to the deck’s creator Emi Brady.

Another favorite deck I own, “The Herbcrafter’s Tarot” by Latisha Guthrie and Joanna Powell Colbert, maps “the fool’s journey” onto the botanical realm and is structured in a way that invites hands-on engagement with common herbs. The plants and cards are numbered according to how they contribute to an ecosystem.

My newest deck, the “Rust Belt Arcana” by Matt Stansberry and David Wilson, depicts the archetypes from the perspectives of the animals and plants in the exurban wilds of Ohio and the Great Lakes. The “Magician” for example, depicts the Steelhead trout, native to the rivers of the West Coast, but adapting to the polluted waters of the Cuyahoga River. The “court cards” are assigned to well-known naturalists, scientists, writers, and activists -- including Robin Wall Kimmerer, E.O. Wilson, Richard Louv, and Mary Oliver.

These nature-themed decks invite me to ask questions such as, “Do we need traditional heroes during this era, and if so, what does that journey look like?” And, “What are healthier ways of expressing Magician or Chariot energies in an imbalanced, consumerist culture?”

We need creative storytelling devices like the Tarot to grapple with, and hopefully curtail, the environmental crises of our time. Renowned cultural historian Thomas Berry, who I had the privilege of meeting and interviewing before his death in 2009, wrote and taught about the need for a new story, a new “mystique of the land” that could counter our industrial fantasies.

In late May, I attended the TB-19 gathering of people influenced by Berry’s vision and committed to living out his legacy. While I don’t have the academic or professional background of many of the participants, I have a strong desire to contribute in what ways I can to this multi-generational cultural evolution.

Morgan Glover has spent years as a professional “storyteller,” including over a decade as a journalist. She no longer helps write the “first draft of history,” but the practice of asking good questions and making sense of the world is still important to her. She has found the Tarot and its archetypal richness can be a way of re-imagining our role in a suffering world.
The Spirituality of Earth

Overview of Thomas Berry’s 1979 Essay

By Herman Greene

In the first part of this paper, Berry makes the astonishing claim that the spirituality of Earth is not something we project onto it. Further it’s not the spirituality we experience when we are touched by the beauty of nature. It is not the revelation of God as an external creator of Earth. It is not the spirituality we see in an ecstatic state of being whether through fasting, liturgy, meditation, drugs, or any other inducement. The spirituality of Earth, of which Thomas writes, is a spirituality within Earth and is expressed through Earth whether or not humans observe or experience it.

This spirituality of Earth precedes humans and humans are born out of it. It is the maternal (generative) principle that gives birth to humans not only as physical beings, but also as sentient, emotional, and conscious beings. What we perceive in us as spirituality resonates with the spirituality that is active in Earth. Even beyond Earth this spirituality is active in the evolving universe. Just as humans were born of the spirituality of Earth, Earth was born of the spirituality of the universe.

Thus he begins this essay by writing: “The subject we are concerned with is the Spirituality of Earth. By this I do not mean a spirituality directed toward an appreciation of Earth. I speak of Earth as subject, not as object. I am concerned with the maternal principle out of which humans were born and whence they derive all that they are and all that they have. Humans in their totality are born of Earth. We are Earthlings. Earth is our origin, our nourishment, our support, our guide. Our spirituality itself is Earth-derived. If there is no spirituality in Earth, then there is no spirituality in us. Humans are a dimension of Earth. These two are totally implicated each in the other.”

Indigenous people understood this spirituality. Berry believed that the West lost the sense of it in the modern period beginning in the 15th century as a result of the Black Death. From that time Western spiritual-religious currents revolved around redemption theology and a personal Savior instead of creation spirituality. The loss of this insight into the spirituality of Earth by American settlers led to barbaric attacks on native peoples and on the American continent.

Berry found in the scientific community a remnant of creation spirituality as scientists have explored the dynamics of the universe. He sought to bring about a new alignment of the redemption-based religious-spiritual communities and the creation-based secular-scientific communities – the latter renewing the spirituality of the former, and the former bringing ethical and meaning-giving dimensions to the later.

In the past the connection between human and cosmic endeavors was symbolized and celebrated. For this connection to be re-established new symbols and celebrations will be needed. The role of women in doing this will be especially important. We will need a new sense of subjective communion with other species, Earth, and universe.

This paper is Berry’s clearest statement of the spirituality of the emerging Ecozoic era.

Reprinted by permission from pages 128-129 in The Ecozoic Way: The Foundational Papers of the Center for Ecozoic Studies. Number 5 published 2018; contact ecozoic.studies@gmail.com to order.

Herman Greene holds a doctorate in Divinity, a law degree, and a masters in Political Science. He studies and teaches process-relational philosophies and founded and leads the Center for Ecozoic Studies to promote Thomas Berry’s vision of The Great Work. His center was a sponsor of TB-19.
Seeking the Ecozoic; Laudato Si at Creighton

By Celeste Rossmiller

In The Great Work (1999), Thomas Berry describes the stories or worldviews that prompted the dominant culture(s) to become so autistic toward sacred Earth that we inhabit. According to Berry, these worldviews fundamentally arise from four societal establishments: education, government, corporate world, and religious viewpoints. Only when we change the basic story, might we hope to create an “Ecozoic” rather than a “Technozoic” Era.

Catholic Climate Covenant sponsored a national conference at Creighton (Jesuit) University in Omaha, June 27-29. Participants reflected on Pope Francis’ call to conversion of our religious, political, and technological ways of interacting with the Earth and the poor. The last chapter of Laudato Si’ offers multiple ways to re-educate and trans-form ourselves, individually and collectively, to respond to the crises we face now and for generations to come. Thus, I believe Thomas Berry would have felt at home with the work the two hundred-plus participants undertook in our days together. Using Berry’s four categories as a framework, I offer some brief summaries of the packed days of the conference.

The education component gave us a plenary address each morning and afternoon, followed by a choice of eight specific tracks to follow throughout the conference: Adult Faith Formation, Advocacy, Creation Care teams, Energy Management, Liturgy, Young Adult Ministry, and Education at various levels.

The religious/spiritual learning was rich with outstanding plenary speakers too numerous to list. Tribal Elder of the Omaha Nation Taylor Keen led the community in prayer on Friday afternoon, reminding us to be mindful of the generations who will follow us. Erin Lothes Biviano questioned, why is it that with reams of theological teachings and scientific evidence, we still have not changed? She described the “Knowledge Gap” (I do not know enough), the “Caring Gap” (I am conflicted even though I know – we are lulled with cultural convenience and consumer ways), and the “Action Gap” (activists may get burned out, or we focus on too small a work rather than joining with others creating larger strategies).

First-night keynoter Meghan Goodwin from the USCCB spoke most directly to the governmental realities of federal gridlock on climate issues.

Saturday afternoon, Dr. Sacoby Wilson exposed business/corporations issues, describing environmental justice concerns as equivalent to slavery. Vulnerable communities around the world become the sink for toxins resulting from dominant communities’ consumerism.

Dominican Sister Patricia Siemen, JD, founder of the Center for Earth Jurisprudence, sent us on our way with the closing keynote. She reminded us to engage with others through stories and values. Overall, the conference inspired us to become more active in our communities of faith to promote a true conversion, such as Francis and Berry both urge upon us. This conversion is what the state of the Earth, in all her life communities, now demands.

Celeste Rossmiller, PhD in Ecotheology of Place, recently retired as adjunct instructor from Regis University, Metro State University and UCD. She is active in 10:30 Catholic Community of Denver and gardens organically and with a permaculture background. Her yard hosts many species of bees and butterflies (and currently suffers with infestation of Japanese beetles).

(Homosapiens) approached the field pen with a bucket of feed for the broiler chickens (Gallus domesticus). We had recently housed them there so that they might benefit from the chance to forage on pasture. Imagine my surprise to find a young red-tailed hawk (Buteo jamaicensis) inside the pen, standing defiantly, wings spread, beak agape, clutching a dead chicken. A chicken I had paid for, raised with care from a day-old chick, and intended to eat. The hawk obviously shared that intention.

Such encounters are not unusual on the farm. They provide me with an intimate reckoning of what it actually means for me as a farmer to claim my place as one of the 8 million species on Earth and to consider a “biocentric norm of reference” as I go about the business of raising food. Questions arise with each encounter.

What do I owe this hawk? What do I owe the chickens I raise? How can I, as a legitimate species inhabiting this land, live in a balanced respectful relationship with other species, like the hawk, who share the same legitimacy? And who, not incidentally, are protected from harm by federal law. What steps can I take as a farmer to protect the animals under my care from predation while at the same time honoring the lived realities of such creatures as the hawk? How do I go about honoring the “entire community of living beings”?

The answers to these questions come out of a way of seeing that strives to allow all beings living here on this land to thrive. That means that I allow for the “hawkness” that leads Buteo jamaicensis to choose one of my chickens for dinner, but I respond in a way that protects Gallus domesticus while guarding this Homo sapiens’s investment. We use electric netting powered by a solar charger to exclude such creatures as raccoons (Procyon lotor) or coyotes (Canis latrans), but winged predators like the hawk obviously are not deterred by such terrestrial barriers. Our only choice at this point is to move the chickens back into closed A-frame shelters within the area defined by the netting. These bottomless shelters are moveable, still allowing the birds daily access to fresh pasture. While the chickens are not able to range more freely, the hawk lives to soar another day. And we continue to enjoy an intimate connection to soil, water, air, sun, pasture plants, worms, and insects in the chicken that feeds us.

Our human-scaled farming efforts here on Plowshares Farm are a privileged opportunity to live in intimate contact with other species. Sometimes such efforts put us in direct competition with other beings struggling to survive. While death is a necessary and sacred expression of our place in the web of life, needless death in the process of raising food can be avoided as we seek ways to share the dream of the earth.

Bob Ernst, CoL, has learned the farming craft over the last 30 years of life on Plowshares Farm. Since the year 2000, he and his wife Sharon have offered opportunities for people of all ages to encounter life on the farm through educational programs, retreats, and immersions under the auspices of the nonprofit Plowshares Farm Center for Education and Spirituality.

A re-enchantment with the earth as a living reality is the condition for our rescue of the earth from the impending destruction that we are imposing upon it. To carry this out effectively, we must now, in a sense, reinvent the human as species within the community of life species. Our sense of reality and of value must consciously shift from an anthropocentric to a biocentric norm of reference . . .

We must now do this deep reflection on ourselves. What earlier peoples did immediately and intuitively in establishing their human identity, we must do deliberately. Within this context we can recognize ourselves not simply as a human community, but as genetically related to the entire community of living beings, since all species are descended from a single origin.

Bob Ernst, CoL

Sharing the Dream of Earth on Plowshares Farm

By Bob Ernst, CoL

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Thomas Berry, from The Dream of the Earth
Cosmic Stained Glass
Continued from page 1

You would have been overwhelmed, as we all were, when the brown linen cloth was removed from the second window, *The Birth of Galaxies and Stars*, revealing clouds of hydrogen and helium roaring with activity, shaping a new universe.

When the cloth dropped from the third window, a collective gasp filled the room as sunshine animated the *Emergence of Life on Earth*. Luminous images of cyanobacteria, ferns, sponges, trilobites, flying fish, the lion man, and Icthyasaur, the ferocious marine predator living during the time of the dinosaurs, came alive before us.

Finally, after hearing the poem of Thomas Berry, *To the Children*, sung in haunting cadence by the women of *Anima*, we were left holding the final line, “to the children, to all the children, may we all go together into the future, into the future, into the future.....”

With these words filling the room, the fourth window, *Our Eco-Zoic Future* was unveiled. Eco-Zoic, a term coined by Thomas Berry, translates as ‘House of Life.’

This window with its huge eye and light and dark tones running through it, invites us to move towards an emerging possibility where human and earth go into the future as a Single, Sacred Community.

During the middle ages when most people could not read, stained glass acted as a *Visio Divina* inviting the viewer to encounter the Divine through the living image.

Today these four Cosmic Stained Glass Windows invite us into a new kind of *Visio Divina*. By quietly contemplating the revelation of the Divine in every being of the cosmos we commit to bringing about the Eco-Zoic Era, going forward as a Single, Sacred Community into the future, into the future, into the future, into the future......

Gail Worcelo *sgm* is a co-founder of Green Mountain Monastery, along with Bernadette Bostwick and Thomas Berry. Gail leads programs and retreats around the world on themes of Evolutionary Spirituality, Collective Emergence and Changing the World from the Inside Out.

*Thomas said, “We are being changed. We are being adjusted to see everything in its proper proportion. We are being driven down to the heart with its radical interior tendencies.” And it was through the heart, Thomas suggested, that we could cross the abyss of past consciousness in order to find a new heart-mind connection for our own lives and for the world....*

*Thomas saw Love as an inner presence to all things. He saw humanity at a crossroads and pointed to another way: a communion of all living forms in the universe, and a sense of the sacred. He taught that the presence of holiness lives in everything that lives, for holiness created life itself. Thomas Berry, taking the long view, saw a sacred universe holding all things, unifying all things, reestablishing what has been obscured through the centuries. In doing so he moved us out of the confines of our limited human community into an earth community and a universe community, opening new portals of thought for life to stream through, and showing us a way forward.*

*From pages xxiv and 143-144 in Recovering a Sense of the Sacred, by Carolyn Toben.*