

Streams

No. 44 Spring-Summer '12 A Newsletter of Crystal Spring Center for Earth Literacy

Candidates for an Ecological Age

Two weathered stone pillars stand sturdily at the entrance of our driveway. A metal plate attached to one reads Dominican Academy and Postulate. It's good to pause a moment every now and again to reread the plated sign. Not more than a hundred yards straight ahead up the driveway is the oratory. The stone building wasn't always called by that name, but that word perhaps best describes the purpose it now serves on this campus. Sometimes someone asks, what's an oratory? It's a small place for reflection and "prayer."

About a dozen years ago a young artist, Pam Cobey, gifted us with her BFA project. While a student in a small Midwestern college she was introduced to the works of geologist and cultural historian, Thomas Berry. In his amazing writings he offered to the world the clearest cosmology, or worldview, a story that offers us meaning and purpose in an ever-creating Universe. Our Universe goes through moments of cataclysmic transformation and in those moments, which he called moments of grace, enduring patterns enter the ongoing functioning of our ever-unfolding Universe. Pam chose fifteen of those transforming events from the great Flaring Forth to the coming of the human and creatively expressed each one in mask form. On any given day you can wander into the oratory, lift a mask from its hook on the wall and reflect upon the long journey we have come. Every cell in our body, our genetic coding "remembers".

Today the Universe Story is our guiding story. When the spring segment of our home-school program began, a new student joined the group. To begin their day, the children first gather for meditation, then sit in a circle to share their reflections. When Arden's turn came, he spontaneously shared his insights which poignantly concluded with ~ we are born of stardust. A harmonious chord resonated through the group. Everyone knew him and met him immediately in the Story. Children love words and notions such as supernova, but this generation truly understands at a deep level that they are born into the great drama of an evolving universe. The Universe Story is imprinted on them. They accept their place and situate themselves among all the "family" who arrived before them. In most dramatic fashion, with the thinnest blade of grass, Zaden can tell you how short the span of time we humans appeared in the Story.

A new democracy resides in them. While we talk of partisan politics or strengthening a third party to move us beyond the impasse of our present system, a new manner of being grows within them. For they have heard the voice of the frogs and the fireflies; they breathe with the spirit of the dragon fly and the meadow lark. They attend the farmers markets and convert worn t-shirts into cloth shopping bags. They can identify the logo for locally grown and eco-apple with the ease with which most identify consumer fashion products.

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Candidates for an Ecological Age, continued

For them a democracy will include the voices of wind and water and a full array of inter-special beings.

Wendell Berry, one of America's most outspoken essayists and conservationists, farmer and poet, received this year's award for literature bestowed by the National Endowment for the Humanities. This honor entitled him to give the annual Jefferson lecture in Washington, D.C. He said that the losses and damages characteristic of our present economy cannot be stopped or restored by liberal or conservative tweakings of corporate industrialism. He recognized that the imperatives of good care, homemaking, and frugality have no standing against such structures. But he's clear that the possible correction comes from two already-evident causes. One such well-established effort is to build and rebuild local economies, starting with the economy of food. A local food system requires that a people recognize human limits and the necessity of human scale. Berry is clear that the purpose is to bring producers and consumers, causes and effects, back within the bounds of neighborhood, which for him folds in within the effective reach of imagination, sympathy, and affection ~ all of the things that neighborhood implies.

Synergy is a power of our Universe. In a universe that emerges out of complexity, when the existence of one thing depends upon the existence of another, the collaborative engagement makes for a very successful strategy. Greater complexity, or, in other words, more spectacular creativity, requires greater cooperation. The synergy swirling in cooperative relationships makes survival possible. :

Before you reach the oratory, the old farmhouse sits to the right. If you enter through the front door the signs will then direct you to the Crystal Spring Center

office or to the Red Tomato office. As the Red Tomato staff says about themselves, they are a unique non-profit with a not so easy goal: to help our region's farmers bring their fresh, sustainably-grown produce to the local grocery...at a fair price!

All that Wendell Berry spoke about in his Jefferson Lecture is tangible here. A food system that dominates global agriculture is based on an industrial model that takes a heavy toll on the resources of Earth, farmers, and on local economies. Sustainable food systems nourish land and farmers, local economy and community ~ in Berry's words you have a deep affection for neighborhood. Red Tomato staff spends their work days "contemplating" the complex interplay of community, economy, ecology, and personal health. Their intention is to make steady progress toward the ideals and the paradisaical dream that Wendell Berry offers to this country.

A cooperative relationship takes hold here...a synergy that senses its way forward. Rereading the sign on the pillar, the word postulate takes on new meaning. No longer can it be interpreted by the narrow definition of 'candidate for a religious congregation.' This place now opens wide to the wonders of a creating universe. We will be reconstituted by children with a new cosmological story imprinted upon them; by a non-profit "contemplating" and initiating the behavioral changes that bring affective relationships, love of neighbor, when that neighbor is the local land and local water, local food system and local economy; and by Sisters recognizing that religious stories must open up to an Ecological Age. There is a new "house of formation" emerging here where we learn the behaviors that embrace Earth as home and make the choices that lead us toward becoming a healing human presence on this planet..

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Summer Solstice Celebration

A guide for celebrating in your own backyard

The eye of the sun opening up long lit daylight hours ~ the summer solstice in our hemisphere, Earth's celebration of the amazing tension that all true encounters are privy to.

What planet do we see emerging in our times from this caressing look of sunlight? Naked green beauty, eating local veggies, hawk talons swooping up a snake, warm rains, crickets in my pocket, garden sweat. Naked fields of drought, terrifying miles of fire, dry river beds, the choke of urban heat, the havoc of storms possessed, thirst.

What are to be the summer solstice rituals for our time?

Celebrate Photosynthesis ~ the generosity of sun pouring its energetic photons into a dancing web of chlorophyll to become food. The intensity of the communion of this moment carries the creativity to transform the coming crises as Earth reinvents itself.

Gather with some friends at "edgy" places where the dynamics of creative encounters show up: the edge of the sea, where forest meets parking lot, around the compost pile, cracks in the sidewalk. What's with this energized zone? Where's the push and pull of difference? What's happening here? Stay for a while to pick up the energy and let it live in you.

Reflect together on the energy you capture and convert for the good of the commons. Bring it to life in dance, music, a communal poem or mural of intention to participate in the power of communion activating our moment. Eat a pot luck of local foods to cultivate the qualities in our relationships that lay the foundation for generosity, compassion and creative participation in re-inventing our species.

What's Happening at Red Tomato

*Crystal Spring and Red Tomato have long shared many values;
since January of 2012 we have also shared our home.*



Fresh Produce-a better tomato-is something you can taste: a perfect summer strawberry, or that first sun-ripened tomato of the season-- sweet, complex, drenched in sunshine, rich soil, rainwater, and the care of wise hands-there's nothing like it. Learn more about our fruits and vegetables, the farmers who grow them, and where to find Red Tomato products in season.

You can find out what local markets carry Red Tomato produce at: www.redtomato.org

Summer Children's Adventure 2012

It is to the forest, that sacred place of wood enabling
paper and dyes to broadcast the human heart and mind.

Here leaves and needles fall brown, death welcomed
for flooring, duff and bedding.

Trunks rise as pillars in need of sunlight, pumping water
then tumble to decay as hiding places, food, birthing rooms

From its bark-y skin to its heartwood, each tree
breath, shelterwood

Mammals cavort, acorns, pinecones, bulging stone ~
Occupy the forest!



The universe in the woodland meets the curiosity and adventure of a human child,
both of the same fiery origins. Summer Adventures invites the child to experience
the delights of homecoming, of learning the forest as our story too. Come be part of
the adventure:

July 30 - August 3, 9am - noon
Ages 5 – 13 ~ Cost: \$90

Coming Home to Place

People everywhere are inspired to join in the collective efforts that seek a new
beginning. This requires a new way of thinking, a new participation. Respect for
Nature's economy stirs in the work of local farmers, land conservation, food systems,
human initiatives everywhere. Our Board of Directors risks the way forward in forming
our transition into the next articulation of the gift given by the Toner Family. We are all
one in *the great work* of our times.

____ Please accept my gift as my participation in the human initiative

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Our gracious thanks to you who are present in all that creates and is Crystal Spring

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