

An Anthology of Precious Blood Spirituality



THE WINE CELLAR

Summer 2010 • Number 23



Ecology

*The heart of Jesus
is the wine cellar
of the blood of Christ.*

— Gaspar del Bufalo —

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An Anthology of Precious Blood Spirituality

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*Published by the Kansas City Province
Missionaries of the Most Precious Blood*

Editorial Address:
PO Box 339, Liberty, MO 64069-0339

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Printed by
Trojan Press, Inc.
North Kansas City, MO

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Blood on the Beach

Villa Maria del Mar is a retreat center near Santa Cruz, CA that offers a stunning view of Monterrey Bay. Recently, six Precious Blood missionaries serving in California gathered at the retreat center for a couple of days of reflection. The first morning was brisk but a couple layers of sweatshirts and hot coffee were more than enough to keep one warm.

The beach was bathed in the light of the rising sun. Brown pelicans cruised just above the water in search of breakfast. Further down the beach, one could see otters riding the waves just off shore, catching a few rays. Breakfast could wait. The line where the sand was smooth from being washed by the tides was jagged but clearly marked. As the waves rolled in, they were beautiful to behold as they folded one upon another until letting go and becoming bubbles on the beach “white with foam,” and then returning to the sea.

Watching that water caress the sun-drenched beach, my thoughts turned to the gulf coast where I gave a retreat the week before. There the oil was pouring out at an alarming rate, polluting the waters, endangering life, and ruining the lives of those who depend on the sea for their livelihoods. Only recently beginning to recover from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the people of the gulf coast are now threatened with an oil spill that kills creatures of the sea, threatens to stain God’s good earth and leaves devastation and despair in its wake.

As the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico reveals in drastic detail, oil and water don’t mix. But this issue of *The Wine Cellar* offers the proposition that blood and water do. Indeed, when water and blood flowed from the side of Christ as he hung upon the cross (John 19, 34), this spilling of blood and water reflects not only sacramental signs that save us and reclaim us as children of God, but also reveals how the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist renew the face of the earth. It is about relationship—the new covenant in the blood of Christ that binds us together as brothers and sisters with all peoples of the earth, and with Mother Earth herself.

It has taken many of us a long time to embrace this sacred connection. One of the reasons why the environment and ecological concerns have not found their way into the mainstream of Catholic belief and activism is because many do not sense this holy, cosmic communion. The environment seems to be a concern for those who are on the fringes of social action activity. After all, the poor are right here in our midst. The images of war and violence are immediate. The 1973 abortion decision legalizing abortion focused the energies of many on the unborn, the most vulnerable who have no voice. And though some in the church are still divided over the issue of capital punishment, the “seamless garment” image made famous by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin covers the death penalty as a right-to-life issue that reflects the inherent dignity of all human beings, innocent as well as guilty.

What all these issues—poverty, hunger, homelessness, war and peace, abortion and capital punishment—have in common, of course, is the focus on the human being, on the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person. But even though we are surrounded by the beauty of nature and are in awe and appreciation of the natural wonders of the world, our passion for protecting the environment or being engaged in ecological activities never took hold until recently.

Some point to Pope John Paul II and his 1990 World Day of Peace prayer as the beginning of the shift in the attitude of some Catholics in seeing concern for the environment and ecology as an issue of social justice. John Paul II wrote:

In our day, there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life.... Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past.

To address the ecological crisis, John Paul II called for a change of lifestyle. “In many parts of the world,” he wrote, “society is given to instant gratification and consumerism while remaining indifferent to the damage which they cause.... Simplicity, moderation, and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become part of the everyday life.” Pope John Paul II underscored that concern for the environment is not only the passion for the few but needs to be the commitment of the many: “The ecological crisis

is a moral issue that has assumed such proportions as to be the responsibility of everyone,” he wrote.

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of John Paul II’s clarion call for environmental concern, Pope Benedict XVI focused his 2010 World Day of Peace message on the care of creation. “The environment must be seen as God’s gift to all people,” Benedict writes, “and the use we make of it entails a shared responsibility for all humanity, especially the poor and future generations.”

In the Precious Blood family, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ have been at the forefront of ecological awareness and action on behalf of the environment. Barb Smith begins a series of several reflections by ASCs focusing on the sacred relationship humans share with the earth that she learned first growing up on a farm, and later in working with the Navajo peoples in New Mexico. “They have such a deep connection to Mother Earth,” Barb writes, “that when a child is born the umbilical cord is buried upon their family land so that the child will always have a connection to her earth Mother.” She traces the development of her community’s commitment to ecology through the Land Ethic that was affirmed by the members of the congregation in October 2005, and inspired Mary Alan Wurth to share a poetic reflection we proudly publish in this issue.

Janis Yaekel continues this theme of living this sacred relationship with all creatures. “To recognize the blood ties with the earth,” Janis writes, “is to offer ourselves extended family.” Timothy Guthridge echoes this holy connection and offers some resources and small ways each of us can help heal the planet. “When we begin to embrace the eternal essence of ourselves and of the planet and embrace the divine unity that holds us all together, healing our planet and ourselves will begin,” Timothy writes.

Two more Adorers, Rita Robl and Helen Ridder, challenge us to “break out of the old systems of thinking, seeing, and accepting the way things are and move into a new and different mindset.” Rita draws upon the inspiration of the seasons that “teach us the importance of letting go in order to bring forth new life.” Helen underscores and affirms this call to “spiritual transformation” by reminding us how the story of creation finds its meaning in our own creation stories, the Jesus story, and the Eucharist.

One of the most prophetic stories told in recent years concerning the protection of the environment and care of the earth is found in the life of Sister Dorothy Stang who was murdered in the Amazon rainforest on February 12, 2005. A member of her congregation who worked with Sister Dorothy for many years, Sister Judi Clemens, reflects on the legacy of Sister Dorothy on the fifth anniversary of her death. “A martyr’s blood can only be

truly revered as a seed,” Sister Judi writes, “if it continues to be poured out in the daily lives of those faithful to the Gospel mandate.”

One of our own prophetic missionaries, Father Ernie Ranly, who lived and worked in Peru for many years, draws upon the experience of living in La Oroya, one of the “ten most contaminated places in the world,” and the inspiration of the Quechua culture and precious blood spirituality to outline an “eco-theology.” As Father Ernie writes, “In the Incarnation, God took on a new relationship with the whole cosmos. In the sacraments, especially Eucharist, this insertion within creation continues.”

Father Barry Fischer picks up on these important themes as he reflects “on our commitment and missionary responsibility” to be “stewards of God’s creation” as we hear the “cry of the earth” and the “call of the blood.”

In the final essay in this issue, Precious Blood Companion Gretchen Bailey writes how she heard this call and cry on the day she almost died in a terrifying car accident near her home in northern California. “We’ve been without a car for a year,” she writes, and it has made her more aware of her connection to all of creation. “Listen to your body, to the birds, to the wind, to the seasons,” Gretchen advises. “Feel all of it. Somewhere there is a message, a voice, an image that is for you alone.”

It is in this sacred communion with our Creator, with one another, with all creatures and all of creation, we find the essence of Precious Blood spirituality: we are not alone; we are all connected.



Receive, O Lord, this all-embracing host which your whole creation,
Moved by your magnetism, offers you at this dawn of a new day.
This bread, our toil, is of itself, I know, but an immense fragmentation;
This wine, our pain, is no more, I know, than a draught that dissolves.

Yet in the very depths of this formless mass
You have implanted—and this I am sure of, for I sense it—
A desire, irresistible, hallowing, which makes us cry out,
Believer and unbeliever alike:
“Lord, make us one.”

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.
Hymn of the Universe

Our Sacred Relationship

by Barb Smith, A.S.C.

The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all of life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.

Earth Charter

From the very first moment of life, creation is relational, cyclical and blest. In Genesis' story, the creation of night and day, heaven and earth, waters and dry land, the sky filled with winged creatures and the earth and waters teeming with life speak of the Creator's blessing. In God's image and with the breath of God, human life, male and female, are created. God proclaims all of creation as good and blesses it saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and bless it."

Each of us carries our own creation story, birthed in relationship, beginning in our mother's womb. As we draw our first breath of air we receive the breath of all peoples and creation. From this moment we are a member of a much larger community of life.

My creation story holds many wonderful chapters. I grew in appreciation for the earth in my grandmother's shadow. She tended the earth and taught me the value of beauty and sustainability. There was always a wide variety of vegetables and fruits from her garden and no family or neighbor would be in need of fresh produce throughout the summer. Complementing the produce, she made sure there were just as many flowers to bless our homes with beauty and fragrance. She shared that special relationship between what was needed to feed the body and what was needed to grace the heart and spirit.

Life connected to the land called for attention to earth's growing cycles and seasons, to the sun's rising and setting and to the gifts of wind and rain that honored the sacred balance of life. The farm was my first teacher

of life's sacredness. I can still recall the first birth I witnessed and how profound this moment was for me, watching as my dad tenderly received a new baby lamb from the mother ewe with which he shared a difficult birthing process. That night, he quietly taught me a respect for life and relationship as he returned the lamb to its mother allowing her to connect with the new life she had just brought into the world. This bonding time was such a powerful reminder that all of creation is relational.

The farm was my first teacher of life's sacredness.

Learning from Indigenous Peoples

From a farm in Nebraska to Navajo land in New Mexico, my love for creation deepened into a spirituality taught by the lives of Native Americans. When I heard the Native peoples call the earth 'Mother' and the sky 'Father' something resonated deep within me. They have such a deep connection to Mother Earth that when a child is born the umbilical cord is buried upon their family land so that the child will always have a connection to her earth Mother. This sacred relationship with the earth is carried out in so many ordinary yet profound ways throughout their living. For instance, when they go in search of firewood they express their gratitude for the wood and ask permission from the tree to be cut down because they knew they would be doing harm to one of earth's creation.

They honor the rising of the sun as marking the beginning of a new day with an offering of white corn as they pray in gratitude for the gift of the day and all the blessings that lie ahead. At noon, they gratefully pause to offer corn pollen for all that has been and for all that will be until their offering of yellow corn meal at sunset. It is at dusk that they acknowledge the blessings of the day and pray for the sleep that will allow them to be awake to welcome the morning sun of a new day.

Their traditional ceremonies honor this relationship with Mother Earth and in their prayers and chants they witness this sacred bond. In the prayer of the "Night Way" this kinship with the earth is sung:

*In beauty may I walk. All day long may I walk.
Through the returning seasons may I walk...
On the trail marked with pollen may I walk...
With dew about my feet may I walk.
With beauty may I walk.
With beauty before me may I walk.
With beauty behind me may I walk.*

With beauty above me may I walk.

With beauty all around me may I walk.

In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, lively, may I walk.

It is finished in beauty. It is finished in beauty.

My spirit has not been the same since sharing life among the Native People. Their love and appreciation of the harmony of all life has found a home within me. It draws my attention to the profound beauty of creation, to the simple things that are so often missed or unappreciated. This sacred

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rhythm of life is like the heart beat/drum beat that resonates in their prayer and gratitude for every gift and blessing of life.

During the time of my ministry with the Navajo People, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ began a process to develop a Land Ethic that would articulate our community's values and beliefs regarding our land and would direct our decision-making processes so that we would be just

stewards of our earth and its resources. I was asked to be on this committee and once again my creation story was broadened and deepened through this experience. Ironically, this process began shortly after our earth experienced the tsunami in India and we witnessed the devastation of the earth and its peoples.

Developing a Land Ethic

As a community we were invited to touch into our relationships with the land, those significant experiences that resonated with the values of family, cultural heritage and our Judeo-Christian traditions. From these experiences we were to begin to create our personal land ethic and to use a variety of creative mediums. We were invited to create a haiku—a Japanese verse form—which expressed our reality of nature. Using this creative approach helped us to express our values and experiences of the land in more feminine and relational ways.

The three-year process we used called for the involvement of all of the Sisters so that our Land Ethic was not the work of a committee but the work of our community as a whole. Nor did we want some nice sounding statements that looked good on paper and did little to call us to fidelity to our commitment to our earth and all of creation. Our approach was broad-based participation and involved not only the Sisters but other resources who called us to see our vital and critical role in the future of our Earth.

The committee received the stirrings and statements of the Sisters' hearts. Collectively we created sacred space and time to read and reflect upon the input. We attempted to articulate their values and beliefs about the land and its resources. When we had compiled the first response we asked the Sisters for their input. Prayer and reflection were so integral to the creation of this Land Ethic that the community retreats in 2005 focused on the Universe Story and the draft of our Land Ethic.

After these sacred opportunities to pray, the Sisters were invited to make any additional suggestions to the Land Ethic statements and the committee revised it, once again honoring those

ideas. The Land Ethic was returned to the Sisters and there was a 98.4 % overall approval of the statement and it was affirmed at our October 2005 Regional Assembly. Our Land Ethic is vital to our Regional decisions in regard to our buildings, our lands and resources as they impact our mission as Adorers of the Blood of Christ in the Church and in our world.

Our Land Ethic is a spirituality of our relationship to our earth. It is my hope that as you read our Land Ethic you will be inspired to touch into your own values and beliefs about our earth and perhaps create your own personal land ethic or stance for the care of our earth.

Whereas, we Adorers of the Blood of Christ believe creation is a revelation of God, we proclaim that:

As Adorers, we honor the sacredness of all creation; we cultivate a mystical consciousness that connects us to the Holy in all of life.

As women, we celebrate the rhythms of creation; with Mother Earth we live the Paschal Mystery of life, death and new life and, with others, preserve and nurture creation.

As students of Earth, we listen intently to Earth's wisdom; we respect our interconnectedness and oneness with creation and learn what Earth needs to support life.

As prophets, we reverence Earth as a sanctuary where all life is protected; we strive to establish justice and right relationships so that all creation might thrive.

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As leaders, we know our choices impact our interdependent Earth community; we initiate broad-based participation to make decisions focused on our common good.

As advocates of Earth, we choose simple lifestyles that avoid excessive or harmful use of natural resources; we work in solidarity with all creation for a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

As companions with creation, we enjoy and share its bounty gently and reverently; we seek collaborators to help implement land use policies and practices that are in harmony with our bioregions and ecosystems.

As co-creators, we participate in God's dream for Earth; we offer new visions and vistas that expand consciousness and encourage creative expression.

As A.S.C. community, we treasure land as a gift of beauty and sustenance; we see it as a legacy for future generations.

The Butterfly Effect

My creation story continues to broaden and deepen through these graced opportunities to collaborate with others, to be challenged to step out of my comfortable stance, and to respond to those varying calls of NGO's and global dialogues that are happening because of the personal decisions I continue to make that adversely affect our earth community.

Recently when I was in South Korea, there was an article in the paper entitled "Saving Their Tears," in which it was reported that the Bangladeshi residents of East Rampura were lining up for their daily water rations. The capital needs 2.2 billion liters of water a day, but the city's water

authorities are only able to provide 1.9 billion liters, prompting one newspaper to call it "the world's worst peacetime utilities crisis."

The headline alone, "Saving Their Tears," stirred an ache in my heart and an awareness of how carelessly I take the gift of water for granted. How many gallons of water do I waste each day with no regard for those who so desperately

How many gallons of water do I waste each day with no regard for those who so desperately depend on water that they would have to save their tears?

depend on water that they would have to save their tears? What I do here does impact the lives of others locally and globally.

I am always fascinated and awed by Edward Lorenz' "butterfly effect" in which he discovered that a butterfly flapping its wings

somewhere in South America could affect the air currents across the world. This is a seemingly miniscule event and yet “those tiny air currents affected in turn slightly larger air currents, which affected still larger air currents, and the small difference in air flow...exponentially increases to become a large difference.”

We all resist the immediacy of choosing just ways of responding to the impact our decisions make upon our earth. We can no longer plead ignorance to the growing devastation facing our world community. All of us must make radical and systemic decisions that will favorably impact our earth and all who walk upon it, particularly the poor.

International Earth Day on April 22 marked its 40th anniversary of bringing awareness of our global interdependence and the need to collaborate with one another as a world community to create a sustainable future and a legacy of hope. What has changed in us over these 40 years that impels us to work for the healing of our earth and the building of relationships that bring about systemic change for the life of our world?

As members of the Precious Blood family, our common gift to our world is reconciliation. When we consider that reconciliation means to “walk together again,” the expression of our charism is one of mutuality. This mutuality embraces one another but must widen its embrace to include all of creation. Our Precious Blood family reaches worldwide, and the impact of this familial relationship has a profound and dramatic effect upon our earth community.

Jesus’ journey to the cross witnessed this tremendous relationship to the earth and to the people. His Blood fell upon the earth and it created for us a radical call to not only walk together again as brothers and sisters but to deepen that reconciling relationship with our earth. His Blood has made our earth a sacrament of His Love.

Because of our world reality, our lives are touched by a diversity of cultures and peoples who create a circle of life.

Our reconciliation must move us from complacency to compassion, from our small view of creation to a global world reality. How can we continue to create that “beautiful order of things that the great Son of God came to establish in His Blood” (St. Maria de Mattias)?

Our creation stories continue to be written and will be impacted by those causes to which we respond, those relationships we allow to

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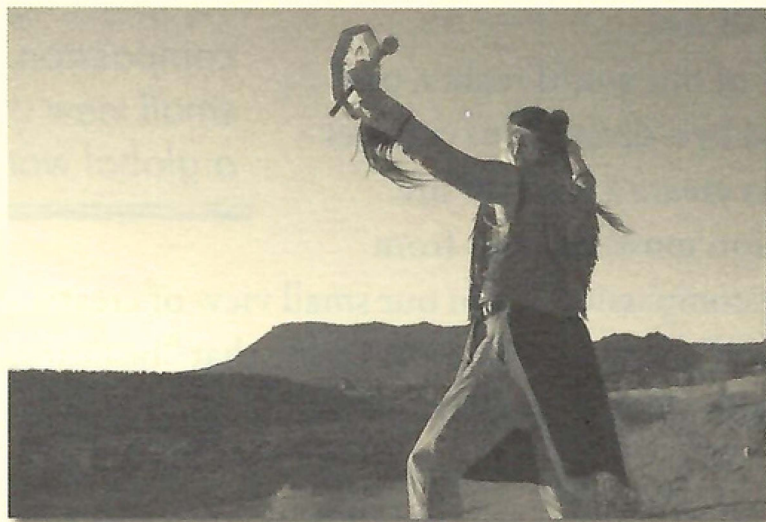
stretch us beyond our narrow confines to reach out to the world and creation. These relationships may seem miniscule, but like the beating of the butterfly's wings, even the smallest movements toward life, creation, relationships and their sustainability impact our global world and all of creation. Let us choose to walk together with beauty before us, with beauty behind us, with beauty above us, and beauty below us. On a trail of beauty let us walk the Earth.



Barb Smith, A.S.C. is a councilor on the United States Adorers Regional Leadership Team. Her energies have been in varied ministries: Candidate Formation Director for the Adorers of the Blood of Christ; pastoral minister for 25 years at St. Paul's Catholic Church on the Navajo Reservation in Crownpoint, New Mexico; Native American Diaconate and Lay Ministry Board member where she helped to develop this vital ministry for the Diocese of Gallup. During her years of ministry she has provided days of recollection for parish, diocesan and community groups.

For Reflection

- What experiences of creation have impacted my life and write my creation story?
- If you were to write a personal land ethic what would be the values you would express?
- Can you recall a defining moment where you were changed because of an experience with creation?
- Spend some sacred time with creation or try writing a haiku about a special moment with creation.



Native American sunset blessing

Reflections on "Land Ethic"

by Mary Alan Wurth, A.S.C.

Oh land once soft and free
You cry in your prison of asphalt and concrete!
We build high for growth and progress—
rigid and unbending.

Oh, land, the plants you bring forth
are strong yet yielding.

The buildings crumble,
the roads break down—
all is trash!

The trees, the grasses
—food and shelter—
that renew the air,
hold fast the earth,
decay and become new again.

Oh, land, you cry,
"undo my shackles."



Mary Alan Wurth is a U.S. Adorer of the Blood of Christ. She now lives at the Ruma Center, her beloved "Holy Ground." Having grown up on a farm in central Illinois, she is most at home in the country. Her ministry of 52 years has included teaching biology, medical research, nuclear medicine technology, outreach to the poor in Cairo, IL, and curator of the archives at Ruma Center.



Blood Ties

by Janis Yaekel, A.S.C.

Human beings value organization and order, antiseptic hands and houses, appropriate behavior, and those hard and fast rules because we cannot deal with the chaos that abounds in life. We have five year planning calendars and blackberries to support our need for focus and orderliness. We instill in our young certain beliefs by invoking the name of God, i.e. “cleanliness is next to Godliness.” The more these dictums become our religion, the further we recede from our relationship with the cosmos, and the less we comprehend our connectedness to the natural world and to our place in creation.

As glorious as creation is, it is still a bloody mess! Whatever rules apply to creation is premised on the importance of relationship and not on what makes individual aspects of creation more comfortable or tidy. Kinship drives the health and well being of the planet, and all of creation has a blood relationship with every other aspect of creation. As Chief Seattle once said, “What we do to the web of life we do to ourselves,” and this is true because we are of the earth.

For eight years I lived on a farm in northern Indiana and we had a rather noble chicken that lived with us. Her name was Spot. She was a White Leghorn and she came to us because she was hatched in a classroom incubator and school was drawing to a close for the summer and the chicken needed to find a new home. We were willing to accept her. Spot was a very social chicken. She would come when you called or she would perch herself next to you if you were sitting on the bench. If you were weeding in the garden she would come over and scratch around for insects in the vicinity. I would let her out of her coop in the morning and try to secure her at night. But early one morning some type of predator found its way into the coop and killed her.

Later that day someone came past the farm and as I began to talk about the death of Spot I got choked up. The visitor looked at me and then began to laugh. She said, "My gosh! It was only a chicken." Later that evening, as I struggled to deal with the hurt feelings caused by my visitor's comments, something became crystal clear to me: it's all about relationship. What the visitor didn't understand was that Spot and I had a relationship, and healthy relationships are love relationships no matter if they be with another human being or with a chicken.

Since that time my view of nature has changed dramatically. As I view the world around me, I realize that every aspect of nature is in relationship with other aspects of the planet. And perhaps the greatest truth that I have uncovered is that we too have a great capacity to enter into all kinds of relationships and that we don't need to limit ourselves to just human relationships or certain types of relationships. We can relate to myriad facets of creation and never diminish our capability to be present to still others.

The one caveat is that these relationships will not always be on our terms. These relationships will expand us, but they won't come wrapped in appropriate packaging. They will be chaotic at times and immensely surprising at others. They will tax our ability to be present and demand that we give as much as we receive. They will require that we dirty our hands and our homes with the untidy but living presence of creation.

In the process we will experience humility and awe as we encounter the Divine Mystery in facets of life that we have excluded from our boundaries before. We will find wisdom for living as we engage the lives of other species. We will see beyond our narrow world to the ever expanding world of God's Presence. We will touch the pulse of Divine Energy in the feel of the daffodil and the heartbeat of a new born kitten. And through all of this we will slowly begin to cherish these blood bonds of connection. These will be precious blood ties that bind us to the crucified earth. These ties will help us to hear in the polluted streams that meander on the surface of our planet, "This is my blood which is being given up for you." These blood bonds will make the fate of the planet a clarion cry of our hearts and not just for humanity's sake but for the sake of all our relations.

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The Rhythm of Life

Too often we have sought to tie off the circulating love of the Creator that is found in the natural world around us. We have slid from relation to domination, from acceptance to exclusion, and from harmony to isolation. We have forgotten the intuition of the heart that for our ancestors was the rhythm of life. We have chosen exclusive rather than inclusive relationships and tried to break free of this tie that binds us to all of life. In our arrogance we made the crucial mistake of ignoring the life lines offered to us by our nonhuman relations.

As we isolate ourselves in our homes and offices, our cars and shopping malls, we shut down the circulation of our deep union with the soul of the planet. We believe that we can bypass the jumble of creative forces and live perfectly ordered lives in perfectly ordered houses. The truth

As we isolate ourselves in our homes and offices, our cars and shopping malls we shut down the circulation of our deep union with the soul of the planet.

is that we can exist that way but we will never fully live. We will never feel the exhilaration that comes with being present at the birth of a calf or the heartache that occurs when we watch an animal companion slide into old age and death. To recognize the blood ties with the earth is to offer ourselves extended family. We will find that we

have a much greater capacity to love than we could ever have imagined. Our hearts will experience awe on a regular basis, and awe rejuvenates us with joy. The earth that we touch and work will ground our emotions and scattered thoughts with gentle acceptance. The great gift that humanity offers the rest of creation is our ability to reflect, to ponder, and to cherish all that we take in with our senses, but if we are not in relationship with creation we miss the opportunity to experience the wisdom of God in the extraordinary moments of grace that nature offers to us daily.

To illustrate, here is another little story from my days on the farm. Pipkin arrived on the farm on an evening when we were being pelted by a torrential rain storm. I had been out in the truck that evening and crossed an area where the water was flooding across the road. I made it through the area but the motor died just as I got to higher ground. I got out of the truck and walked to the front of the vehicle, and in the beam from the headlights I saw a drenched little calico kitten sitting on the side of the road. I picked her up and took her back to the truck. After a couple of moments, I tried to start the truck, and it came to life immediately. And I found myself asking, "What's this all about, God?"

At home the concern became, “How will Mottyl, the lion queen of our farm, feel about another cat invading her territory?” She didn’t take long to let us know. The new kid on the block was not appreciated. Mottyl acted offended. She was indignant that this little pipsqueak was encroaching on her domain. Pipkin, on the other hand, was just elated to have another feline around. Day after day we would watch her continue to try to make inroads with Mottyl. “Her Majesty” would walk regally through the house ignoring the chubby little fur ball, and then Pipkin would sneak after her. When Mottyl realized that Pip was behind her she would turn around, hiss and bat her on the head. Pipkin would crouch for cover, but when Mottyl walked off Pipkin would be right after her again.

I was impressed by Pipkin’s tenacity, but after three weeks I was beginning to think that Mottyl might never accept her. Day after day Pipkin would come, Mottyl would hiss and bat, Pipkin would crouch, and Mottyl would walk off again. Finally, one day I watched the two of them outside on the lawn. The same sequence of events started again but this time there was a subtle change. This time when Mottyl turned around she not only batted Pipkin but also jumped at her. Pipkin ran away and Mottyl chased her a few steps. Was this an escalation of the battle or the beginning of play?

Slowly day by day it was becoming obvious that Mottyl was testing to see if this patchwork kitten really could be trusted. As Mottyl let go of her fear, the play became more and more enjoyable to watch. Eventually Pipkin could approach Mottyl—in a submissive way of course—and Mottyl would allow herself to be licked by Pipkin. Then Mottyl would clean Pip a bit. I knew we were home free the day I walked into a room and saw the two of them curled up together sleeping in the sun. Little Pipkin had not given up and I think that Mottyl was very glad she hadn’t. Fear had danced into relationship and patient tenacity transformed the waters of loneliness into the wine of friendship.

The Power of Perseverance

When I think back on the summer when Pipkin met Mottyl I am reminded of Luke’s gospel, chapter 11: “I tell you, even though he does not get up and take care of the man because of friendship, he will do so because of his persistence, and give him as much as he needs. So I say to you, ‘Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you.’” Pipkin wanted a relationship and she was willing to endure the pain and the chaos to achieve it. When I observed the two cats I saw the potential of living our relationship with God in a persistent fashion. Even when God remains silent I think God is helping us weed out those things

that are the true treasures—the things that we should tenaciously contend for—from those things that we think we must have but really don't need at all. The true, deep and good desires that we long for we will receive. They may not be given according to our time schedule or how we'd like them given, but God will fulfill these desires.

Persistence, first of all, comes out of a desire for something. In the case of Pipkin it was a desire for relationship, companionship and a sense of belonging. She persisted because this desire was so strong. As I watched Mottyl rebuff Pipkin's overtures of friendship I expected that Pipkin's desire would eventually begin to diminish, but it never seemed to waver. Like Pipkin, we all have deep God-given desires. In times of spiritual struggle it is good to be able to touch that inner desire, because somehow it renews our conviction to carry on even if at times it feels like we're going nowhere. If in the darkest hours of our lives we can truly say that we are still desirous of a love relationship with this hidden God, then we can be sure that a deeper relationship is close at hand.

Initial steps will not necessarily be successful and the desire of our heart may not be easy to achieve. Like Pipkin, we may not always achieve our goal right away.

Sometimes relationships are elusive. Just as Pipkin tried many different tactics to engage Mottyl, so too we try different doors to find the one that will open us to the deeper relationship with God. Most of us believe that nature can be a door, but perhaps we knock and then run off for fear of what this relationship will cost us or because we won't be able to control it.

The goal of the relationship we are seeking may not be our own. It may be the ever so slight movement of the other party involved, the movement that we might miss if we are not alert. Perhaps for Pipkin it was the subtle change in the way that Mottyl came after her. Perhaps it was a certain look or less hissing or growling. Whatever the proverbial crack in the door was, it was enough to build hope in Pipkin that her quest was not in vain.

Just like the desire itself belongs to God so too there are moments, thoughts, feelings, glimpses or experiences that keep us going. At times synchronistic events call us to ponder how it is that God is leading us. Sometimes it can be just the moment of calm in an otherwise turbulent sea that indicates that we are to keep searching. Sometimes it is the encouraging

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word from someone else that re-energizes the seeker within. However it is manifested, it is the work of the One we are seeking.

Stepping into the Night

In the passage from Luke, the man who goes to his neighbor in the middle of the night seeks him because he needs bread to feed unexpected visitors. While the seeker who keeps banging on the door in the middle of the night is given credit for his persistence, perhaps we overlook the greater act of faith of this seeker. In order to get what he wants the seeker must first be willing to walk out into the night.

There are those times when we feel lost, adrift, needy or in a dark hole. Those are times that it seems so much easier to run back to what we know, to fall into old ways, old patterns of safety. Once we find the door and begin to knock, could the hardest part be over? Is it not the going out of our own door, out of our comfort zone and into the darkness, that is the real leap in faith that God rejoices in? Once we get to the neighbor's door we have traversed the darkness, survived the terrors of the night and confronted our fears. This dark night can seem at first distasteful and we might feel battered, but important relationships are worth the leap into the unknown. For the human, walking into the dark night is an inevitable and necessary step in relationship building.

Many of us are a bit like Mottyl. We don't even know that we want a deeper relationship with creation. We are so out of touch with

We are so out of touch with our environment that we cannot even recognize the hollow place within that aches for reconnection with creation.

our environment that we cannot even recognize the hollow place within that aches for reconnection with creation. Yet within each of us is a God that urges us beyond what we know, beyond the safe and into the great beauty and broader horizons that await us. Perhaps in the end the seeker in the parable of Luke, like Pipkin, pounds on our door and shakes us

from our complacent sleep to realize that there is some gift we have to offer the world or that the earth has a gift to offer us.

The persistent Spirit of God within continues to urge us to greater and greater depths of relationship. This Spirit seeks to encounter the part of us that has bread to share. The hidden light within the seeker is connected to the light of the Bread Giver. The Bread Giver gives because He is sought. He becomes more only because the seeker draws it from him. For those who

desire relationship with creation we must be both seeker and giver, for it is within that dynamic that we find the expansive energy of God.

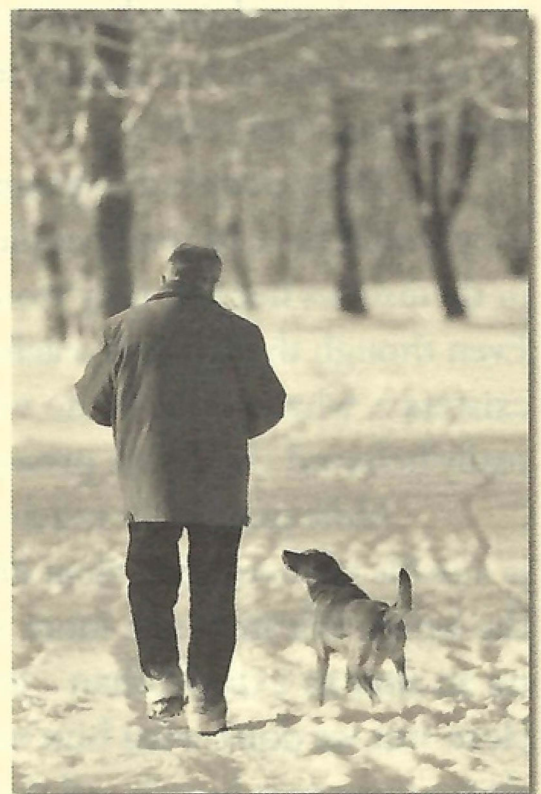
The reflective side of my humanity needs to have healthy blood ties with creation, for I am not separate from but in deep relationship with the cosmos. It is true that the insights that have come to me through my experience of Pipkin and Mottyl might have come by another avenue for me, yet how gently God opened my eyes to see deeper because I dared to enter a relationship with the earthy community of beings. I invite you to open your eyes, step out into the messy living creation and relate not so much for the sake of the planet but your own sake. Transfuse the heart of your soul with the oxygen-rich life-blood of earthy relationships. Celebrate the Cosmic Christ in your relationships, in your blood ties with creation.



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For Reflection

- How comfortable am I with allowing nature to get up close and personal?
- What relationship with creation has led me to deeper insights or questions?
- What are some of my fears concerning intimate relationships in creation?
- How deeply do I experience the Paschal Mystery in the sufferings of creation?



Healing the Planet Healing Ourselves

by Timothy Guthridge, C.P.P.S.

In his book, *Finding Grace at the Center*, Basil Pennington writes, “At every moment God is intimately present to each and every particle of his creation, sharing with it, in creative love.” When God makes things, God just doesn’t create them and ignore them, but actively participates in the creation. If this is true, then when we look at creation, we don’t just see grass, trees and blue skies; we see the divine presence of God.

If this is true about creation, what does this say about humanity which has been made in the image and likeness of God? Do we see the divine presence of God in others? Do we see the divine presence in ourselves? Do we see the divine presence of God in creation? We cannot do one without doing the other. I am suspicious of people who claim they see God in nature but cannot see God in people. This has more to do with denial than with reality.

Many people don’t want to see God in other people because then they would have to treat people differently. People don’t want to see Christ in themselves because they would have to treat themselves differently. Even though the Church teaches the Holy Spirit is an intrinsic part of our existence, what would we do with all of our grudges and resentments if we really believed the divine presence of God lived in our hearts?

Most people are much more comfortable worshipping a God that is outside of themselves than inside themselves. In fact, the farther God is the better. We are much more comfortable with a Jesus in a monstrance on an altar in a chapel than a Jesus who dwells in the heart. We want Jesus close, but we don’t want him too close. The truth is God has always been as close as our next breath. All the various things around us are material forms created from materials created and sustained by the presence of God.

What if we took this notion of divine presence in all things and applied it to the world. More than a few spiritual writers have written on the notion that God is in everything and everything is in God. As a people created in the image and likeness of God, we can only move and exist in God.

Spiritual writers from the East have been writing about this for centuries. Western writers are just beginning to explore this interconnectedness. People who talk and write about the lack of separation between God, people and the planet are treated with suspicion. There is a fear of pantheism creeping around the corner. But the real fear is intimacy with God. People prefer detachment—it is safer. Then we can say that we are independent, which in the U.S. is a virtue.

Being Responsible Stewards

There is also strong fear of responsibility. If we keep people at a distance, then we don't have to take any responsibility for them. If we pretend that we are not a real part of the earth, not only do we not have to take care of it and be stewards of it, we can use and exploit it to our hearts content.

Humanity has been exploiting and abusing the planet for centuries. Since the beginning of the industrial revolution poor people and the earth have been exploited and abused at very high rates. The earth is sick, and so are many of God's people. Pollution, lack of clean water, and unsafe and unsanitary working conditions are making millions of people's lives—not to mention a good portion of the earth—a living hell. It should not surprise us that the earth is experiencing so many earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, floods, and droughts. But it is not the wrath of God that is causing these events; it is a sick planet crying out for healing.

A large part of society is still in denial that we are killing our planet. Years ago, I took an environmental course in college which conveyed that in the end nature always wins and that the earth will heal itself. The course also reflected that massive destruction of humanity could be part of the earth's healing process. But God has too much love for us and the rest of creation to let that happen. God's grace and love are greater than humanity's arrogance and ignorance.

A large part of society is still in denial that we are killing our planet.

We live in a world that loves to consume, especially in the United States. According to the *National Geographic Earth Pulse State of the Earth 2010*, if everyone in the world consumed as much as people in the United States, it would require 5.4 earths to provide the necessary

resources. If people in the United States consumed as much as people in Great Britain, it would only require 3.1 earths. If Americans consumed like people from India, there would be more than enough. The United States is the biggest consumer of energy in the world. The U.S. has only 9% of the world population and uses 23% of all the energy.

American oil companies like to blame increased fuel consumption in China for our high fuel prices. The truth is, if the Chinese consumed as much oil as Americans, oil production would have to more than double to meet the need. The United States by far sets the pace of global consumption, but the per capita consumption of China, India and Brazil is increasing rapidly.

The U.S. has only 9% of the world population and uses 23% of all the energy.

There are many threats to our fragile ecological system. For example, the world is suffering a deep thirst for water. More than a billion people lack a safe water supply. In the decades to come, global water demand is expected to increase by a third. Water is the world's most important and most limited resource. There will be great debates in the future over how water is to be used and who gets to use it.

Meat consumption has increased over the years. In the 1980s only 22% of farm produce was used to feed cattle. Today it is 46% worldwide and 59% in the United States. People only eat 33% of the food that is grown. We have the best fed cattle, hogs, sheep, goats and chickens in the world. This wouldn't be such a bad thing if there wasn't so much hunger. It takes much more land to raise livestock than to raise crops. The more meat that is consumed, the more farmable land is consumed.

Deforestation is also a major problem. Plants are needed to provide oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide. The Amazon rainforests, which cover over a billion acres and provide 25% of the world's oxygen supply, are being cut down at an alarming rate. Fresh air is hard enough to come by the way it is.

Making a Difference

There are many ways that we can make a difference. We should not underestimate little ways. There are 6.8 billion people in the world. Everyone working to heal the planet in small ways can go a long way. The world is not beyond healing.

For example, in order to reduce disease and environmental concerns caused by poultry waste, Thailand is forbidding poultry production within 60 miles of a city.

The increased use of solar cells (up 51% since 2007) is helpful in reducing dependency on coal and oil.

The use of compact fluorescent lamps and bulbs has more than doubled since 2003. These bulbs use 75% less energy and last ten times longer than traditional bulbs.

There are presently 2.3 million people employed in the renewable energy industry, especially in Germany, Spain, the U.S. and Denmark. These countries have led the way in this industry and this industry is growing.

Global wind power capacity has grown 27% between 2006 and 2007. The United States now has the capacity to power 4.5 million homes through wind power.

There are many things people can do to help the environment. Some excellent websites include: www.ehow.com/help-the-environment; www.wikihow.com/help-the-environment; and www.waytogogreen.org.

Remember, there is no separation between God and God's creation. God does not abandon creation; God sustains it. The world belongs to God and not us. The idea that humans possess the earth is one of our greatest delusions, causing untold destruction to the planet. God took 4.5 billion years for the earth to evolve, and people and corporations think they own it. This false sense of ownership contributes to the delusion that people can do whatever they want to the land without consequence. We have cemeteries full of remains and ashes of people who thought they possessed the earth.

A Native American once told me that the Native peoples could never have invented the bulldozer—because of their creation myth

which conveys that the earth is their mother. It never could have entered their imaginations to create a machine that could carve up the earth. Strip mining would be out of the question.

The divine presence of God is part of the essence of all things. This divine presence is eternal. All material things are impermanent.

When we begin to embrace the eternal essence of ourselves and of the planet and embrace the divine unity that holds us all together, healing of our planet and ourselves will begin.

They will all disappear. Human society likes to cling to that which is impermanent rather than the eternal. When we begin to embrace the eternal essence of ourselves and of the planet and embrace the divine unity that holds us all together, healing of our planet and ourselves will begin.

The Spiritual Connections

St. Augustine writes in his *Confessions* (1:1), “O God, thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.” We cling to that which makes us restless. In the United States this includes mass consumerism which demands massive amounts of earthly and human resources. None of this stuff is ever going to makes us happy. In fact, more often than not, all the unnecessary junk we purchase leaves us unsatisfied.

In the *Phenomenon of Man*, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin wrote that all evolution leads to Christ. In fact, Christ is the essence of all things, and it is our lack of our awareness and detachment from this reality that enables us to live sinful lives that are not in harmony with God, each other and creation—which then causes so much destruction.

Jesus shed his blood upon the cross in order to heal and reconcile us from this detachment and delusion. The precious blood is a spirituality of healing and reconciliation rooted in the Christ centeredness of all things. Our willingness to be stained and transformed by the blood of Christ brings us to this Christ centeredness.

The Scriptures tell us that God made Jesus Lord of heaven and earth. The Scriptures also tell us that the risen Christ has created a new heaven and earth. Our planet is sick and wounded and crying out. When we talk about the cry of the blood we are not just talking about people but about the planet as well. The planet and its people are not separate.

The world is not beyond healing. The world is no more beyond healing than God’s people are beyond healing. The world, God’s people, and God are inseparable regardless of what our perception of things tells us.

When people choose to start living in harmony with the earth, God and each other, healing will begin. The Blood of Christ makes this more than a possibility, rather a reality which we need to embrace. Our hope is always in Christ, but we must do our part. We need to actively participate in our roles as children of God and heirs to God’s eternal kingdom—which is here and now, not in some far off time in the future. We must be willing to be stained and transformed by the Precious Blood of Christ and choose to live in harmony and union with all that God created. As the world heals, we and the planet will heal as the universe will be transformed into Christ’s new creation—which was willed from the beginning of time.

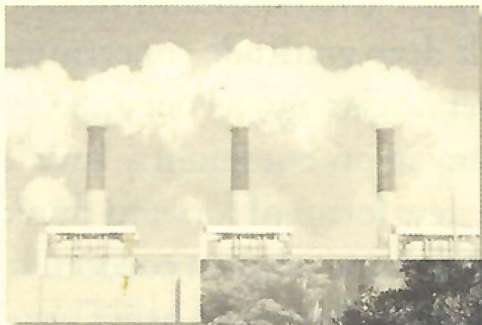
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Timothy Guthridge is a member of the Kansas City Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. He is currently residing and working at St. Francis Xavier Parish in St. Joseph, Missouri as a parish priest. During the summers, he is a graduate student at Creighton University in the Christian Spirituality Program. Beginning in the fall of 2011, he will begin a ministry of providing private directed and preached retreats.

For Reflection

- What can you actively do to help bring a small amount of healing to the planet?
- How and what do you consume and what effects do you think it has upon the planet?
- Do you see yourself as connected in a healthy way with the planet, God and others, and what could you do to improve this relationship?
- How do you see the Precious Blood of Jesus affecting your understanding of your being a part of the planet and the universe?



Transforming Thought: Toward a New Way of Thinking

by Rita Robl, A.S.C.

I am writing this article as I watch the brilliant colors of spring unfold in the year 2010. We have just completed the Triduum and celebrated the beautiful Liturgy of Resurrection. During this time many thoughts have crossed my mind and some new realizations have come to light. What does all this mean? What is it that we have celebrated?

As I reflected on this further, I found myself being extremely grateful for the emotional and financial support given me in my many environmental and spiritual endeavors. I felt deep gratitude concerning the land ethic, formulated and adopted several years ago by our A.S.C. community. It caused me to realize how many in my community have let go of old belief systems and have embraced new forms of forward thinking. Belief systems that are no longer of any use can keep one in a cocoon. It takes great willingness to make necessary changes. Many old belief systems focus on negative aspects of who we are and how we live.

As a culture, we think everything around us is for our use, whether needed or superfluous. Consumerism runs rampant. We are a throwaway society and very little seems to be held sacred. We shop, shop, shop whether we need the items or not. It is just fun to shop and have everything at our disposal. We have taken our jobs and our resources for granted because money will always be available!

Thomas Berry once observed, "One of our difficulties has been we've been trying to tell the human story apart from the earth story, apart from the life story, apart from the story of the trees, and the forest, and the rivers. So the isolation of the human story from the larger community story has isolated us from the world around us." We are isolated in our thinking. We forget that humans are not the only ones on this planet. Inclusion of other species is important if we plan to move into the future.

How can we change the way we think to make a difference in our lives and in the life of the planet? How can we move from a throwaway society to a reverent appreciation of all that we have? It is necessary to break out of the old system of thinking, seeing, and accepting the way things are and move into a new and different mindset. But it cannot just be a head trip; it must be a change in consciousness. The words that flash in my mind are “spiritual transformation.”

Spiritual Transformation

Transformation needs to happen in all of us in the same way it is needed in the entire planet. Each season nature tries to teach us the importance of letting go in order to bring forth new life. We see transformation all around us and are amazed at the magnificent colors of the redbud trees, the ornamental pear trees, the bright yellow daffodils, the thousands of small golden flowers that snuggle tightly together on the long branches of the forsythia and the brilliant green grass and radiant winter wheat fields. We have taken nature’s transformation from being stark naked to absolute gorgeous color for granted. We see it in our heads but have not experienced the deep feeling of mystical beauty and delight in our hearts.

Thomas Berry once observed, “One of our difficulties has been we’ve been trying to tell the human story apart from the earth story...”

The Buddha reminds, “It is our mind that creates this world. Do not believe, just because wise men say so. Do not believe, just because it has always been that way. Do not believe, just because others may believe it so. Examine and experience for yourself!” What we have thought was real, and would always be here for us, has collapsed. Our earth has suffered much abuse, violence and devastation. Our consumerism has gone too far. Our use of chemicals has ruined our health as well as our air and our soil. Our greed has put us into an economic downfall, an educational tailspin, a health care crisis and a church distrust.

Because of these happenings, Earth is feeling a deep need for total transformation. Storms and floods, earthquakes and tsunamis are Earth’s way of cleansing herself. The more we see these events as breakdowns and as a means of breaking through, the more we will recognize our own ability for new and much needed breakthroughs.

Jesus often used earth symbols in his parables. He loved earth and cared for her in a compassionate and caring way. Throughout his life,

Jesus began realizing his power and divinity. His divinity gave him the insight and strength to go through what he went through for us, to show us that we too are struggling through the very same process as we mature. As we seek to grow in our spiritual awareness by means of meditation, contemplative prayer, healthy relationships and vibrant community life, we realize that we also have that spark of divinity within us. “I tell you most solemnly,” Jesus said, “whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works” (John 14:12). We have the same wonderful powers as the Universe and the same amazing powers as Jesus demonstrated. We are a microcosm of the macrocosm!

We need to let go of what has been holding us in that tight shell, not recognizing the powerful energy that is within us. We know we are

Each season nature tries to teach us the importance of letting go in order to bring forth new life.

living in difficult and changing times. The issue seems to revolve around our thinking. Deep insights about our transformational needs are being realized by people all over the world. We can move from duality/third dimensional thinking into a higher dimensional thinking through a shift in consciousness. Such a shift will allow us to experience a state of oneness and peace.

A Shift in Consciousness

There are many wisdom figures willing to help us as we seek an evolved state of consciousness. Even though they come from different parts of the world, they share the same message of peace and love. This message is beautifully reflected in the top-grossing film of all time, *Avatar*. It is a marvelous movie portraying the higher self, the Christ consciousness. The deep spiritual connection was felt by people in the audience when Neytiri spoke to the Avatar the precious words, “I see you,” translated as, “It is your spirit I love.” The Christ consciousness of love and compassion operates in harmony with universal principles and also operates from an understanding that is cosmic in nature.

In a timely message from the Satya Center we read, “We are at a crucial moment of cultural transformation—the end of the Age of Competition, Industrialization and Oil and Global War and the beginning of the Age of Co-operation, Environmentalism, Renewable Power and Global Community.”

Neale Donald Walsh, author of the book, *Conversations with God*, writes, “A new world is upon you and all peoples of the earth. A different

tomorrow awaits. Nothing is going to be the way it was before. Not your finances, not your politics, not your work life, not your relationships, not the way you experience your spirituality—all of it is changing...and going to continue to change. The only question remaining: Will you be part *author* of those continuing changes, or merely one who is impacted *by* them?”

A shift in consciousness is absolutely necessary for us to totally understand these beautiful and profound messages. We realize what is being asked of us and our need to respond accordingly. The earth changes are occurring daily and so are individual changes taking place in each of us. With help and encouragement from one another, we will pass through these many changes in a state of balance and conscious awareness, without fear or doubt. In the process, we joyfully respect all of nature, live compatibly with all species and experience a New Earth with total delight.

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third dimensional thinking
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Our God is a God of abundance! What a gift for all of us to realize and experience our new and energizing powers. It is exciting to move into a mystical way of being one with goodness, love and peace abounding all around us. Being awake to God’s love allows huge manifestations to be ours on a daily basis. Enjoy a new LIFE on earth like we have never imagined before!



Adorer of the Blood of Christ Rita Robl is cofounder and former director of Great Plains Earth Institute (GPEI). Presently she serves on the Board of Directors of GPEI, an environmental nonprofit educational organization that seeks spiritually integrated solutions to ecological challenges through experiential processes. Before GPEI, Rita founded and served as director of the Acuto Spirituality Center in Wichita. She continues some retreat work and willingly walks with individuals in spiritual direction. For more information about the GPEI, the website is www.gpei.org.

For Reflection

- There are different views given in our news/media concerning 2012. Do you see 2012 as a time of growth or a time to be very fearful?
- How could a person monitor their speech or way of speaking with others concerning negative versus positive communication?
- View the movie, *Avatar*. What do you see? How do you feel? What connections do you sense in your own spiritual life?



Fruit of the Vine and the Work of Human Hands

by Helen Ridder, A.S.C.

Since human beings could talk and express themselves, telling stories has been a part of history, as well as a way to teach and remember. Storytelling reveals the soul of a people. Stories were passed on from one generation to the next by word of mouth, each generation adding something new to their understanding of their lived experience. There were stories of love, courage and faith as well as the daily warts, clay feet and betrayals. These stories raised questions about the meaning of life: Where did we come from? Where are we going?

The invention of writing was both a blessing and a curse. A blessing because it preserved the wonderful stories for prosperity; a curse because people took a living vibrant story—added to in its telling from one generation to the next—and froze it, written in stone, on papyrus scrolls, the printing press or the internet. The stories still had life and vibrancy, but in time lost the richness of the lived experiences of the following generations being added to it.

As the centuries progressed it became the priority of scholars to ‘interpret’ the meaning of the stories, to the point that the common people were not allowed to read them on their own and glean from them new meaning for themselves and their generation.

The wonderful stories of the Hebrew and Christian traditions also experienced the same unfolding as the ancient cultures. Only since the 15th century has our understanding of our home planet changed—from a flat land area supported by pillars, as presented in Genesis, to an understanding of our small blue planet as belonging to a community of wondrous beauty that fills our night sky.

Story of a Landscape and a Life

Over the years I have lived in the stark beauty of the West Texas desert and the verdant beauty of the northern lake region in Indiana. But the place I call home is the Great Plains that make up the mid section of the land mass that stretches from Canada through the United States well into Mexico.

The Great Plains lie in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains. The mountains milk the clouds of their moisture so that the land east of the mountains is dry, able only to support vast grassland—short grass prairie in the west because of the small amount of rain and tall grass prairie on the eastern side of the state as more clouds pick up moisture.

*Storytelling reveals
the soul of a people.*

How has this grass community thrived over the millenniums with so little rainfall? The sturdy grass of the plains sends its roots down 25 feet to water deep below its surface. It pulls the water up to keep the grass green. If you walk through the prairie community you will notice the many wild flowers clustered in the tall grass. Their beauty is breathtaking! The wild flowers and other plants survive with much shorter roots because they drink the water that is brought to the surface by the deep roots of the prairie grass.

They also contribute to the life of the prairie because of the nutrients they contribute to the health of the grass. Lightning adds nitrogen to the soil. An ecosystem (a living vibrant community) is a wonderful story of the ongoing health of nature herself, in which we humans are an integral part.

I grew up in the Great Plains Community, just west of Wichita. One of my earliest memories of nature was going for a walk with Mom on our farm which was 160 acres of short grass prairie. We stopped to look at some buttercups. As we looked at them Mom said, “Don’t just look at them, really look at them!”

I did that with grasshoppers, trees, rocks and all kinds of varmints. Nature fascinated me. One time I was out walking in the wheat field west of our house. It was a bright sunny day. A breeze was gently making waves in the wheat. As I walked, I noticed that a new light shown in the northwest, even brighter than the sunshine. The wheat had a special glow as though from within each blade. I knew at that moment I was a part of the whole universe, a part of all that is. I was so happy I danced through the wheat field. That experience has stayed with me all my life. It has been a beacon light, a guide on my journey. As I have grown older, I equate that experience with the vision quest of the indigenous people of our own country.

The Jesus Story

Jesus, too, was native to his place of Palestine. He was born in Bethlehem in a cave used as a stable, amidst cattle and livestock. Wise men came from the pagan east, a star leading them and angels announcing the good

news to shepherds in the surrounding hill country. All of creation was present in the wonder of his birth.

An ecosystem (a living vibrant community), is a wonderful story of the ongoing health of nature herself, in which we humans are an integral part.

For thirty years he shared the simple life of the people of Nazareth. He grew up most likely helping his father in the carpenter shop and like other boys took the neighborhood

sheep out to the hills to forage their dinner. He was a bright lad, so I imagine he poked around the hills of Galilee soaking up the beauty of this place. He watched the trees blossom in the spring, the wild flowers blooming. He probably explored the streams, noticing all the stream things and finding colorful rocks, maybe bringing some home to show his parents and adding to the collection as time went on.

As the story goes, he was about twelve when he went to the big city of Jerusalem. How awed he must have been to see the huge buildings, especially the temple, visiting the markets with all the wares and produce that came in from the countryside and by caravan from far countries. As he wandered through the temple he got caught up the wonder of it all. He stopped to listen to some scholars debating some point of scripture. As he listened he asked a question or two maybe over some aspect of the law that puzzled him.

The rabbis, struck by the intelligence of his question, asked, "Who is this lad who can ask such questions?" I imagine it was about at this point that Mary and Joseph found him. "Did you not know I must be about my Father's business?" That answer always seemed to me a typical response of a typical teenager. "Did you not know I must be about my Father's business?" Mary was puzzled and pondered his words in her heart.

For 30 years, Jesus lived in the midst of his people, living their ordinary life, visiting with neighbors—some friendly, some cantankerous, some obnoxious—getting to know himself, his neighbors and the countryside, working side by side with his father in the carpenter's shop. This deepened his appreciation and insight into nature. Behold the birds of the air. The farmer went out to sow his seeds. A woman mixing flour and water, a little salt and some yeast, kneading the dough, watching it rise, round and firm like a pregnant woman. The blind and lame, the confused

and the oppressed, came to him. They were like sheep without a shepherd. Tensions were building. “Who is this?” “Is this not this not the carpenter’s son?” “Can anything good come from Nazareth?”

The Story of Eucharist

It was Passover when two of his disciples prepared an upper room for the Passover meal.

In his book, *The Hidden Gospel*, Neal Douglas-Klotz describes that sacred moment. “*And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins. But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my father’s kingdom*” (Mt.26:27-29).

The Aramaic language provides only one word for “blood.” This is *dama*, a word which—like the Hebrew word *dam*—must also stand for juice, wine, sap and essence. It shares the same root with the word *adam*. So Jesus may have been saying: this is my blood, juice, wine, sap or essence. The reference to the “fruit of the vine” can also mean any offspring, including human. The word for “vine” comes from the verb meaning to dig, or form a body from. Metaphorically, it can be used in Hebrew or Aramaic to refer to blood lineage, for instance, the vine sprung from Adam or Abraham.

In later Christianity, this ritual was called Eucharist or communion, but was largely interpreted as symbolizing Jesus’ death on the cross in redemption of the sins of humanity, which of course is true. But the Jewish roots of the ritual were ignored.

“*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it; and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.*” (Mt 26:26). Here the Aramaic word for “body” means a corpse, or something that gradually loses heat and energy over a period of time. This is the most common word for body that Jesus uses in the Aramaic Gospels. This word reminds us that the body has only a limited life span compared to the longer-lived soul-self (*naphsha*) and breath-spirit (*ruha*).

When Jeshua identifies the bread (*lakhma*) with his dead body, we can also see him indirectly invoking *Hokhmah*, Holy wisdom, who produces food for our consumption that is ultimately made up of the dead bodies of

So Jesus may have been saying: this is my blood, juice, wine, sap or essence. The reference to the “fruit of the vine” can also mean any offspring, including human.

other beings—including human ones—after they return to the earth. In this sense, we can see that Yeshua is making a similar reference to a corpse, which accords with the Aramaic sense of “body.”

In giving us his body to eat in the Eucharist, Jesus is nurturing us. We are not only partaking of Christ’s body individually, but Jesus is nurturing his Living Body, the People of God, in this time and place (*The Hidden Gospel*, pp. 166-168).

The Creation Story

The story of creation as told in Genesis is set in a garden, an agricultural scene. According to Scripture scholars Adam was the first man, whose bloodline we share. Eve was “the mother of all the living.” So when we eat of the Eucharistic bread and drink from the cup, we share in the life and vibrancy of all ages. The Jewish people traced this line back to Adam, who was the first man of the Patriarchy.

With the evolution of our understanding of God’s creation of the world, we know that that bloodline goes well beyond the time of Adam and Eve. The bloodline goes back to the ancient times of the Matriarchy, back even before life was chronicled in history, back to our prehistoric ancestors. When we eat of the Bread and drink of the Wine of Eucharist, we share in the life and vibrancy of all ages past, which we carry in our very DNA.

But we know that is not the end of the story. Just as we carry the whole creation story in our very life, in our very blood, so we will be part of the bloodline that will stretch through this millennium and beyond. It is God’s work—but God has made us partners in this work. The decisions we are making now will affect generations to come.

When we eat of the Eucharistic Bread and drink from the cup, we share in the life and vibrancy of all ages.



Adorer of the Blood of Christ Helen Ridder taught mostly in elementary schools in the small rural communities of Western Kansas. When Bishop Maurice Dingman of Des Moines, Iowa began an organization to work with farmers to help them become acquainted with issues of environmental farming, Sister Helen participated in these meetings and became acquainted with the issues affecting farmers. She worked for a time at Earthworks with Sister Janice Yaekel, A.S.C., on a small farm owned by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. Sister Helen's journey also took her to the tall grass prairie of the Flint Hills where she worked for the Land Institute based in Salina, Kansas.

For Reflection

- Reflect on a Scripture passage that resonates with the story of your life?
- As a member of the Precious Blood family, how has the charism and spirituality of the blood become a source of life and strength for you?
- What is the focus of your life's journey at this time?



Listen to the Fallen Seed

by Judi Clemens, S.N.D. de N.

It is the Easter season and I cannot remember how many times I have found myself connecting the life/death/new life cycle of Jesus to the story of Sister Dorothy Stang, a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur murdered in the Amazon rainforest on February 12, 2005. Dorothy was my sister in religious life and a dear friend with whom I spent over 20 years in Brazil. Dorothy's DNA was wired to the words of Deuteronomy 30, 19: "Choose LIFE." For Dorothy all of LIFE was a sacred trust, and to this cause she gave her one and only LIFE. Dorothy was a Gospel woman who cared for all of creation with a passion that was contagious.

Dorothy will forever be remembered for so many gestures of responsible stewardship. Her words to Brazilian authorities when she spoke to them of the devastation of the rainforest linger in many hearts today: "Have you heard monkeys cry?" She was referring to the loss of the rainforest canopy—the natural habitat where monkeys live and thrive that was being so brutally destroyed by loggers and ranchers. The passion with which she uttered these words was her very heartbeat as she walked the paths that opened the forest to settlements for poor farm workers and their families who came to settle on lots of the Eastern Transamazon Highway. Dorothy came as all pioneers came—with only what was necessary to survive. Did she know the words of George Eliot?

*If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life,
it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrels' heart beat,
and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence.*

Dorothy migrated with another Sister from the State of Maranhão to the neighboring State of Pará in the early 1970s to accompany farmers in their search for land and dignity.

When the first and second villages where Dorothy lived were overrun with cattle ranchers, Dorothy visited the Xingu Prelacy at the suggestion of her bishop who told her that the needs were greater there. When Dorothy met with Precious

Dorothy was a Gospel woman who cared for all of creation with a passion that was contagious.

Blood Bishop Erwin Krauttler and presented herself ready to serve in the most abandoned region of the Prelacy, Dom Erwin asked her to live on the Eastern Transamazon and build community among the newly arriving settlers. Dorothy walked and Dorothy listened. She heard the need for schools, support for alternative crops and transportation to carry produce to market, a call for permanent communities with legitimate titles to unoccupied lands being cleared and cultivated.

A Gospel Woman

When Dorothy was gunned down on that fateful rainy Saturday morning in 2005 there were at least 30 schools with teachers trained under her watchful guidance. Dorothy was present when the village of Anapu became a municipality. She lived with the hope that finally there could be a pathway to titled land for the small farmers. Dorothy had travelled the 60 km from Anapu to the distant settlement of Esperança, a newly established “PDS” (Federal Program for Sustainable Development) to support the families in their struggle against neighboring ranchers greedy to take over the newly formed Sustainable Development area. There were constant threats and one home had been burned to the ground.

Dorothy did not travel alone. She was in the company of the Union President and an agronomist who came to instruct the farmers about planting *cacão* and *pimenta* to supplement their basic sustenance crops. This “PDS” was a new Federal program to preserve the forest and give security to families entitled to the land. Dorothy knew this was a dangerous trip. She had received many death threats, as had her co-workers, but she chose to listen to the cries of these families and be there with them. Dorothy was a very intelligent woman who studied Brazilian agrarian laws, drew maps of land demarcations and met frequently with Brazilian authorities to discuss and register formal complaints of land abuse and human rights violations by loggers and ranchers. She was known and respected by the authorities although they did little or nothing to change the existing reality.

Dorothy was a Gospel woman, steeped in a spirituality that revered all of LIFE and the precious earth where she lived. She cultivated the land and left a legacy of beautiful fruit trees wherever she lived. Dorothy's simplicity was so disarming that she spoke in the same tone to both friend and foe, and she truly believed that hearts could change. Dorothy so believed this that when she met her assassins face to face she

Dorothy's simplicity was so disarming that she spoke in the same tone to both friend and foe and she truly believed that hearts could change.

conversed with them, showing them maps to explain that the ranchers for whom they were working had no right to lots in the PDS. When asked if she was armed she reached in her tattered cloth bag and brought out her Bible. She began to read the Beatitudes! (The

details of her last moments were recounted by one of the "PDS" residents who followed closely behind Dorothy as they headed to the scheduled meeting up the path.) Dorothy did not act alone. She had the support and companionship of her SND sisters in community as well as that of the pastoral team with whom she worked.

A Martyr's Legacy

Five years have passed. What do we know of LIFE in Anapu today where four Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur continue as members of the pastoral team along with a dedicated Brazilian priest of the Xingu Prelacy? The pastoral team receives total support from Precious Blood Bishop Erwin Krauttler, himself a victim of a serious attempt on his own life. When Dorothy died there were 35 Base Christian Communities. Today there are 80. The families in the "PDS" are transforming their homes into permanent structures and there is an abundance of produce for family consumption as well as for market sales. Very soon five young agronomists, sent to school by Dorothy, will return to Anapu for their internship.

In the midst of these hopeful signs there is increased violence. Both state and local governments, including the police, have mobilized behind the ranchers so that they have greater access to the forest and the land initially given to the landless poor farm families. The people are justifiably angry and the ranchers will stop at nothing to obtain what they want. The situation is volatile. The importance of the continuation of the trials of those accused of plotting to kill Sister Dorothy is a major work involving the Pastoral Team and the families in the Base Christian Communities. The pattern of impunity must be broken in the State of Pará.

As with any charismatic leader there are those who treasure the memory of Dorothy's vibrant journey of courage and there are those who abominate all she worked for and envisioned. There is a deep divide between greedy ranchers and loggers and those who choose to live in community. Danger continues to surround those in leadership roles in the communities and justice is yet to be forthcoming in the cases of those who planned and executed Dorothy's murder.

Dorothy continues to call us to global discipleship that embraces the cause of dignity for all God's creation and the tender stewardship of the Earth. A martyr's blood can only be truly revered as seed if it continues to be poured out in the daily lives of those faithful to the Gospel mandate. At the time of Dorothy's martyrdom a farmer shouted in the crowd,

"Dorothy is not buried, she is planted in this soil." The seed of Dorothy's life continues to grow as her story is told and retold in books, music, DVDs, an award-winning documentary, an opera and many other creative educational projects.

Those who follow Dorothy's story and the stories of myriad other justice seekers in Brazil and around the world answer the call to solidarity by giving their one and only lives as seed that others may live in dignity and peace. Perhaps a time of meditation on the Beatitudes that Sister Dorothy read to her killers, coupled with words she spoke during her lifetime can call each of us to our sacred space of discipleship:

A martyr's blood can only be truly revered as seed if it continues to be poured out in the daily lives of those faithful to the Gospel mandate.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT;
THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS THEIRS

"If we strip ourselves of all our extras that consume so much of our time and thoughts on how to care for them, our leftover time is no longer colored and it is no longer hard to give a Gospel response."

BLESSED ARE THE SORROWING; THEY SHALL BE CONSOLED

"I don't want to flee, nor do I want to abandon the struggle of the farmers who live without any protection in the forest."

BLESSED ARE THE LOWLY; THEY SHALL INHERIT THE LAND

"We need to be poor with the poor and re-appropriate a kind and tender relationship with Mother Earth. Then we will know how to act."

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO HUNGER
AND THIRST FOR JUSTICE;
THEY SHALL HAVE THEIR FILL

“Our Gospel response calls us to take risks among our people. They don’t have this privilege or they would be killed if they resist openly...indeed, they are killed.”

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO SHOW MERCY;
MERCY SHALL BE THEIRS

“We can’t talk about the poor. We must be poor with the poor and then there is no doubt how to act.”

BLESSED ARE THE SINGLE-HEARTED;
FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD

“I know they want to kill me, but I will not go away. My place is here alongside these people who are constantly humiliated by persons who consider themselves powerful.”

BLESSED ARE THE PEACE MAKERS;
FOR THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD

“We are a global people—one family. A deep Christian value is sharing. I am an instrument to help them come together. I am a person free to do that.”

BLESSED ARE THOSE PERSECUTED FOR HOLINESS’ SAKE;
THE REIGN OF GOD IS THEIRS

“I light a candle and look at Jesus on the cross and ask for the strength to carry the suffering of the people. Don’t worry about my safety. The safety of the people is what is important.”

BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN THEY INSULT YOU
AND PERSECUTE YOU
AND UTTER EVERY KIND OF SLANDER AGAINST YOU
BECAUSE OF ME.
BE GLAD AND REJOICE,
FOR YOUR REWARD IS GREAT IN HEAVEN.

“My heart screams for joy, but I am in need of patience as it (land reform) can’t happen overnight. How to maintain hope alive has been a challenge. I have to be with these people. If it means my life, I want to give my life.”



Sister Judi Clemens is a member of the Ohio Province of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Sister Judi grew up with Sister Dorothy Stang in Dayton, OH, and spent 22 years working in Brazil with Sister Dorothy. Upon her return to the States, Sister Judy spent 18 years in pastoral work accompanying Brazilian immigrants in the Archdioceses of Boston, MA and Miami, FL. She is currently living in Cincinnati, OH and serves as the Site Director for Notre Dame Missionary Volunteers AmeriCorps, a national ministry of the Sisters of Notre Dame.



Eco-theology

Reverencing *Pachamama*, Mother Earth

by Ernesto Ranly, C.P.P.S.

Eco-theology is the new word to explain and describe the role Christian theology plays in the issue of ecology and our care for the earth. Our challenge is to insert the spirituality of the Precious Blood into eco-theology. We Missionaries of the Precious Blood who have worked in Peru have a very specific case to address. I refer to the deadly contamination around the refineries of La Oroya.

La Oroya is classified within the ten most contaminated places in the world. In the 1890's the American company Cerro de Pasco (New Jersey) began buying mines throughout the central Andes of Peru. In the 1920s Cerro de Pasco made the town of La Oroya its refinery center. The emissions from the three tall smokestacks and other chemical emissions were blown downhill to the east and totally destroyed all vegetation for some 25 square miles.

Precious Blood Missionaries arrived in 1962, eleven years before I came to Peru in 1973. We took for granted that modern industry necessarily has these consequences. It was not until the end of the 1980s that a new consciousness came upon us all.

On January 1, 1974, the government of Peru took over all of Cerro de Pasco, which then had the name of Centromin-Peru. In 1993, the American Company Doe Run from St. Louis, MO bought only the refineries of La Oroya. The company signed an agreement with the government that in five years it would install the new technology to stop all destructive emissions. Doe Run had already done this in its refinery in Herculaneum, MO. The first five years went by and nothing was done. Another five years and still the company did nothing.

When pressed about these environmental concerns, Doe Run

threatened to close down the whole operation. Already, many workers are without jobs. There have been strikes and any number of demonstrations. It is very complicated and has become an international issue.

Doe Run tries to demonstrate good will by giving special care to more than a hundred children suffering lead poisoning. Those of us with experiences in the Third World know companies who exploit the earth in ways they would never do in their own country.

Pachamama and Eco-theology

The native culture and indigenous language of Peru which created the historic Inca Empire is Quechua. The historical culture has a great respect—almost veneration—for Mother Earth. The word, *Pachamama*, simply means Mother Earth. She is the source of all life. All vegetative and animal life—and human life—is like a dancing over the face of Mother Earth. In the spring, before the growing season, the farmer or gardener will dig a small hole in the ground and pour a little wine into the earth. He begs pardon of Mother Earth and begs Pachamama for a good harvest. During a mountain hike one of our missionaries found in a crevice in the rocks a small bottle of wine and three cigarettes. It was an offering to *Pachamama*.

The word ecology has become widely accepted to describe the concerns over the environment and climate change. Technically, its meaning within the biological sciences is the relationship between living species and the environment. In sociology, ecology refers to the human community and its relationship to material reserves. The etymology of the word “ecology” is from the Greek. *Logos*, of course, is knowledge or study. *Eco* in Greek means “house.” Ecology means the study of our dear Mother Earth, our house, our common home.

Theologians are now addressing the issues of ecology. There are academic courses and books with the title “eco-theology.” This gives a wonderful orientation to the whole world of ecology. Here we presume that what we call eco-theology is Christian theology.

We return to the book of Genesis with new perspectives. We re-read the first account of creation with a new appreciation of the goodness

In the spring, before the growing season, the farmer or gardener will dig a small hole in the ground and pour a little wine into the earth. He begs pardon of Mother Earth and begs Pachamama for a good harvest.

and the beauty of creation: “God saw how good it was.” The first creation narrative describes the creation of humanity as the culmination of all creation. They were to have “dominion” over creation and to “subject” the earth. As we will see, these words must be carefully interpreted within the context of the second creation narrative.

The second creation account describes how God made the wonderful Garden of Eden. “The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the Garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it” (Genesis 3, 15). This is surely a different story. Is “man” to have dominion over the earth, or is he to cultivate and care for the earth? If we put all of this into a single instruction, humankind is to dominate and subject the earth through loving cultivation and care for the earth. If this were the one and only story, the history of humanity would be a positively glorious tale, a tale of Eden. But we all know the next chapter of the Biblical story when Adam and Eve will eat of the forbidden fruit.

Blood is Life

As we understand the spirituality of the blood of Christ, blood is life. This is a basic theme through all the Hebrew Scriptures as well. The blood of all animals is to be treated with respect and reverence. The blood of a slaughtered animal must be carefully poured into the earth. The blood of sacrificed animals is set aside and then reverently poured out over the burning sacrificed animal.

If blood is life, do we dare say that life is blood? Are the liquids of all vegetative and biological life a kind of blood? With this in mind we could re-read the creation narratives with a new insight and a new sense of the sacredness and holiness of creation.

To repeat the Biblical themes: all blood is life and all life is holy and sacred and must be respected. Surely we must include in this vision

The very planet earth is our mother, the source of all life.

that all biological and vegetative life is sacred. All life is holy and sacred. Now we come close to the native Peruvian culture which says that our planet is our Mother Earth—Pachamama—the

source, the mother of all life and all life is holy and sacred. The very planet earth is our mother, the source of all life.

Some may want to accuse the native Peruvian culture as being a type of pantheism as if they worship Mother Earth as God. But respect and reverence is very different from adoration or worship.

Original Sin

In the second Genesis narrative, the serpent tricks Eve, Eve tricks Adam, and both hide in shame. Our tradition calls this original sin. In this tradition, original sin has profound negative consequence, both human and cosmic. For example, Eve and all mothers will give birth only in pain.

God says to Adam, “Cursed be the ground because of you! In toil you shall eat of its yield all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, as you eat of the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall get bread to eat until you return to the ground from which you were taken. For you are dirt and to dirt you shall return” (Gen 2, 17-20).

With this narrative in mind, we are witnesses to the many serious cosmic consequences of Adam and Eve’s disobedience. God’s beautiful creation is now marred by thistles and weeds. Yet, like humanity itself, there remains a basic goodness and beauty of Mother Earth. But, yes, through sin we humans feel ourselves broken and weakened, not only in so far as the human family but also in our relation to earth, what was meant to be the Garden of Eden. We live within these consequences. We see the sun rise, we hear the birds sing and we smell the roses. We visit national parks with awe and excitement. Yet we allow forests and the Amazon jungle to disappear without our questioning why. We accept natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis and hurricanes as cosmic consequences of original sin. The question of how and why a provident God permits these disasters upon innocent people is a deep mystery. But we now have come to understand that many climate changes are natural necessary results of our human mistreatment of the planet.

Returning to the Genesis narratives and our contemporary English translations, there are five important words: ground, soil, dust, dirt and earth. We all know the traditional formula for the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday: “You are dust and into dust you will return.” The New American translation of the Bible even uses the word “dirt.” We must put all of this into a different context.

Incarnation, Redemption and Eucharist

In the Incarnation, the Word of God took on the fullness of humanity, except sin. The son of Mary is a baby, youth, adult. He felt hunger, thirst and fatigue along with the higher sentiments of caring, sympathy and love. His death was a human death and his body was buried. What word should we use here? Did the body of Jesus return to dust?

In our present English Eucharistic liturgy the presider prays aloud during the preparation of the gifts:

*Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation.
Through your goodness we have bread to offer,
Which earth has given and human hands have made.
It will become for us the bread of life.*

Here we accept with enthusiasm the word “earth.” It is our Mother Earth—*Pachamama*—which gives us bread and all human life. Why do we not permit words such as dust and dirt? Yes, death is a consequence of original sin. But our physical bodies return to Mother Earth, where in faith in the Resurrection of Jesus we await a new glorification of earth in full culmination of the Kingdom of God.

The intimate relationship between earth, ecology and the Eucharist was pointed out at the world synod of Bishops on the Eucharist in 2005. La Oroya is in the Archdiocese of Huancayo. Its archbishop, Pedro Bareto, S.J., is very committed to the defense of the environment. Archbishop Bareto

*Ecology becomes theology
and our faith commits us to the
defense of Mother Earth, even
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was a representative from Peru at the Synod and participated in a small discussion group with Precious Blood Father Barry Fischer. Archbishop Bareto pointed out in his seven minute discourse to the Synod that that

the sacramentality of the Eucharist necessarily accepted and needed the very stuff of earth. Therefore, ecology becomes theology and our faith commits us to the defense of Mother Earth, even for the elements of the Eucharist.

A summary of our Catholic faith is: creation, sin, incarnation, redemption and glorification. If we insert blood into this summary, then blood is life, it has been violated, and God returns to creation with the human blood of Jesus by which all has been redeemed. The full glorification of the Blood we see in the book of Revelation. The spirituality of the Blood of Christ is not only devotions or some theological concepts. Spirituality is an ongoing transformation of life, which for us includes all life, the very life of our Mother Earth.

We must continue to reflect upon and extend the meanings of these mysteries. In the Incarnation, God took on a new relationship with the whole cosmos. In the sacraments, especially Eucharist, this insertion within creation continues. Redemption is through Christ’s Blood. But this is not a one-time historical event. In the second epiclesis of the Mass we beg the Holy Spirit that we all become the People of God, the living Body of Christ. We are to carry on the Eucharist into our daily lives, transformed lives, which through the Holy Spirit is to transform the world. This is a living spirituality of the Blood of Christ.

Whatever the evil of sin and all the negative consequences of sin, God loved us to the extreme that the Son of God became human in Mary. Jesus was a sweating carpenter from Nazareth, feeling hunger and thirst like everyone else. He suffered and died. He was of the earth and to the earth returned.

Incarnation leads us to sacramentality and to the Eucharist. The incarnation touches cosmic creation in a profound way. We see it in sacramentality where physical things are infused with God's presence and power.

The Eucharist is the culmination and the full perfection of the sacraments. The Eucharist is the living source of a living spirituality of the Precious Blood. This includes our love, care and defense of Mother Earth.

Defending *Pachamama*

The Quechua culture concerning Mother Earth is attractive. It does not explicitly touch upon sin of which we are so conscious. But Christian redemption in its totality gives us a new relationship to Mother Earth. We can do this with great enthusiasm if we insert our traditions and spirituality of the blood.

The Church has always taught that the basic goodness of humanity and creation was not destroyed by sin. Yet we all know that in ourselves and in the bigger world there is much to be done.

So we pray, "Let your Kingdom come." How and when and where and by whom?

We all have our one common *Pachamama*. We are blood brothers and sisters in the one human family. Through the covenant of blood, especially the Blood of Christ of the new and eternal covenant, we live lives of faith and confidence.

We wait for the final glorification which is described for us in the book of Revelation. The final glory of eternal life in Heaven is not a purely immaterial spiritualist thing. It is the new glorification of all of creation, a

new Eden, with the resurrected body of Christ, the presence of Mary and all the communion of Saints. This is the culmination of eco-theology. We prepare ourselves for all of this with a spirituality of the Blood of Christ which accepts sin, redemption and glorification.

Through the covenant of blood, especially the Blood of Christ of the new and eternal covenant, we live lives of faith and confidence.



Precious Blood Father Ernest Ranly holds a Doctorate in Philosophy and was on the faculty of St. Joseph's College, IN for seventeen years. He served in Peru for thirty-two years and in Bogota, Colombia for three years. He has published several books and various popular and professional articles in Spanish and English. Father Ranly is in residence at St. Charles Center, Carthagen, OH.

For Reflection

- Have we ever connected our spirituality of the Precious Blood with the issues of our environment and climate change? Is this valid or is it an exaggeration?
- Here we have as a background the ancient culture of Peru. Can we learn similar lessons from the various cultures of our Native Americans?
- Ground, soil, dust, dirt, earth. We are earth and into earth we shall return. With a broader sense of incarnation, redemption, and resurrection, how is this curse turned into faith and hope?



The Cry of the Earth

by Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S.

I write this article amid the awesome beauty of Austria. We live surrounded by majestic mountains, rolling hills, rich farmlands and flowers everywhere. Beautiful gardens, flower boxes on the windowsills and balconies of homes are tended to with loving care and add to the natural beauty.

However, my extensive travels as Moderator General also took me to the arid areas of central Tanzania where people sometimes have to dig holes in the parched earth with their hands in a desperate attempt to find water. And I have been to La Oroya, in Central Peru, where the mountains are bare and colored a sick grayish-white, the result of so many years of poisonous contamination spouting from the chimneys of the mineral refinery.

These contrasting images highlight the differences which exist between the haves and the have-nots, between those who take for granted the abundance of natural resources and the beauty of God's creation, and those who from the day they were born were never able to drink clear, uncontaminated water—as I witnessed in my time of ministry in Guatemala, where still today the first cause of death among children and adults is dysentery.

In this article I will reflect on our commitment and missionary responsibility as stewards of God's creation within the framework of the spirituality of the Blood of Christ.

The Cry of the Blood

We often speak today of “the cry of the blood.” This has become a useful way to connect our spirituality to everyday realities. It is a cry that John Paul II exhorted Christians to make our own in *Evangelium vitae*, #25.

He makes a passionate plea to make the blood of today's victims heard and to respond in compassionate solidarity as we build a "culture of life" and a civilization of justice and love. The "cry of the blood" is a soul-piercing appeal that conveys what God expects of us: a justice that reflects God's own fidelity and special care for the helpless and hopeless. We as people marked by the blood of Christ are particularly sensitive to this cry and to the appeal of the Holy Father.

Like the Good Samaritan who responded to the cry of the wounded person lying by the roadside, we also attempt in our humble ways to bind the wounds of those we encounter on our journey of compassion and solidarity.

In today's society where the themes of ecology, climate change and the care of the earth are moving to the forefront, persons living from a spirituality of the Blood are being challenged to stretch our understanding and to also hear "the cry" which rises from the earth itself. Our earth is wounded; it has been raped and abused. Do we hear her cry?

H. Paul Santmire, in his book, *Nature Reborn: The Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology*, refers to this cry. "We Christians will be a voice for the voiceless, for the sake of all creatures of nature who have no voice in human affairs. We will listen to the plaintive cries of the great whales and hear the groaning of the rain forests, and we will be their advocates in the village squares and in the courts of power, by the grace of God. All the more will we hear the bitter wailing of the little children who live on the trash mountains of this world and who wear clothes that have been washed in streams overflowing with heinous poisons and who sometimes drink these very waters" (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000, 119-120).

Our earth is wounded; it has been raped and abused. Do we hear her cry?

Stewards of the Covenant Bond

One of the fundamental themes of the spirituality of the Blood of Christ is that of covenant. Covenant relationships defined the world in which the Israelite people lived. The covenant bond between God and a people became the symbol of proper relationships. Biblical justice demands fidelity to all our covenant relationships: to God, to humans and to the earth.

The Jubilee Year prescribed in the Hebrew Scriptures (Leviticus 25:23-55) was a special time to celebrate God's presence and sovereignty over all things. Deeply rooted in the covenant commitment, it was a time

for restoring the fabric of human relationships and for restoring community. It was a time of reconciliation. Social unbalances in the agricultural and urban society were corrected. Slaves were freed and monetary debts were canceled. The lands were to lay fallow, and lands which were alienated were restored to their respective owners.

In Hebrew society the clan was a factor of unity and defense of peoples and families. One of the most beautiful expressions of the family unity and obligations towards one another is found in the law of *Go'el*. In the case of illness, plagues, poor harvests or other disasters, families and individuals were helped by the *Go'el*. He was the protector and defender of the clan. The *Go'el* would be a brother, a paternal uncle, the brother-in-law or some other blood relative. For the Israelites to defend the clan was the same as defending the Covenant.

The concept of the *Go'el* was later applied to the Kings in the service of their people, to Yahweh and eventually to Jesus. One of the oldest titles which the first Christians used to interpret the service which Jesus rendered to His people was that of defender (*Go'el*)—savior, redeemer, liberator, advocate, close relative, elder brother. He was the close relative who came to help his brothers and sisters so that they might live once again in harmony. Within this context we understand Jesus' option for the poor and the marginalized and his preaching of the Reign of God, in which no one was to be excluded and all were invited to sit at the Banquet Table of Life.

Our world has strayed far from the notion of biblical covenant. We live in a society of rampant individualism. As the free market economy makes a firm foothold in societies around the world, the traditional family values often give way to the individualistic and egoistic race towards acquiring more and more riches and material possessions. Consequently,

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family, sharing, hospitality and community all suffer. There is a new kind of bonding going on. It is the bonding to the false god of consumerism and material goods. When people worship these false gods, then the bonds that connect

us to one another in community break down. In this type of society, some people and nations become richer and richer, while the majority grows poorer and poorer and are increasingly marginalized. And our earth is mercilessly stripped bare and raped and her natural resources depleted senselessly due to greed and the lust for more and more material goods. *Carpe diem* (seize the moment) seems to be the rule, without thinking of

future generations and their basic needs. “Eat, drink and be merry; who cares about tomorrow?”

The situation of the Hebrew Scriptures repeats itself. Who will be the voice of the voiceless today? Who will defend the weakest members of society? Who will raise their voice to protest the injustices and inequalities of society? Who will defend the rights of the excluded ones? The question posed in the Gospel, “Am I my brother’s and sister’s keeper?” rings in our ears. We might add to that question: “Am I my earth’s keeper?”

Our answer is a definitive and resounding, “YES, WE ARE!”

We know ourselves as intimately connected with all creation. We belong. God created the earth and entrusted its care to us. We have seriously neglected this

important responsibility. We need to assume our responsibility and to restore a more proper relationship with our environment, so that all human beings have the opportunity to live in dignity.

Pope Benedict XVI, called by some, “The Green Pope,” has become increasingly vocal about ecological and environmental issues. In *Caritas in Veritate* (“Charity in Truth”) he writes, “The environment is God’s gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole” (#48). He calls us to pledge ourselves to take care of creation and to share its resources in solidarity.

Not only does he speak about the issue, but he acts upon it in concrete ways. To give but one example, Benedict has replaced the cement roof tiles of the Paul VI auditorium with 2,400 solar panels that convert sunlight into some 300,000 kilowatt-hours of power each year, which is equivalent to the needs of about one hundred families. Another “green project” presently under consideration in the Vatican City State is the installation of small windmills as well as water treatment plants to break down water-waste products.

As persons who live and minister under the banner of the Blood of Christ, we are called to witness, promote and defend *fidelity* to all the relationships and responsibilities that stem from our covenant with God in Christ. We could describe our mission as that of being “guardians and keepers of the Covenant,” modern-day “go’els.”

We need to assume our responsibility and to restore a more proper relationship with our environment, so that all human beings have the opportunity to live in dignity.

Reconciliation: The Call to Restore Relationships

As “stewards of the covenant” we have been entrusted with the mission to protect, defend and promote the proper care of nature and our relationship with her (cf. Genesis 2:15). Because of our carelessness and lack of responsibility, the perfect harmony of humanity and the rest of Creation ruptured.

When reflecting on the blood of reconciliation, we often speak of the need to heal the wounds which we have received during our life journey or the wounds which we have inflicted on others. These wounds are purified and healed in the blood of Christ who took upon Himself our woundedness so as to heal and redeem. From the point of view of our mission to be persons of reconciliation in all its dimensions, we also recognize “the scars which mark the surface of our earth: erosion, deforestation, the squandering of the world’s mineral and ocean resources in order to fuel an insatiable consumption” (Benedict XVI in Australia, “Welcoming Celebration,” World Youth Day, July 17, 2008).

We are called to be partners in the process of reconciliation and in the birthing of that new creation which “waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God” (Romans 8:19).

The Eucharist and Care of Creation

The Eucharist is central to living a spirituality of the blood. Around the table of fellowship we celebrate our condition as a covenant people. It is there that our relationships are restored with God and with one another. But often one crucial, important relationship is left out. We reorient our lives to God and to self and to one another, but often we do not restore our relationship to nature.

Every Eucharist creates an event of communion and connectedness. Every Eucharist has a cosmic character in which all creation is lifted up. Creation is a precious gift God has placed in our hands. When we worship, we lay our broken beings and the wounded world before the merciful God who gives renewal in resurrection.

During the Synod of Bishops on Eucharist in October of 2005, Pedro Barreto, S.J., Archbishop of Huancayo, Peru, spoke during his presentation on the Synod floor of the connection between the Eucharist and the care of creation:

Every Eucharist creates an event of communion and connectedness. Every Eucharist has a cosmic character in which all creation is lifted up.

The Eucharist, being the high point to which all creation tends, is also the answer to the concern of contemporary society for ecological balance. As “the fruits of the earth,” the bread and wine represent all of creation which has been entrusted to us by the Creator. That is why the Eucharist has a direct relation to life and to the hope of humankind and should be a constant concern of the Church and a sign of Eucharistic authenticity. Not only human beings but all of creation awaits the recapitulation of all things in Christ (Colossians 1:19-20.23)... The Eucharist commits us to struggle so that the bread and wine be the fruit of “the fertile, pure and uncontaminated earth.”

Thus the Eucharist becomes a “project in solidarity” as we share the goods of the earth with the poor, as an expression of Eucharistic spirituality.

In his post-Synod Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Pope Benedict wrote: “The relationship between the Eucharist and the cosmos helps us to see the unity of God’s plan and to grasp the profound relationship between creation and the ‘new creation’ inaugurated in the resurrection of Christ, the new Adam” (#92).

A Call to Action

In every cry of the blood that we hear, we can discern a call to action. How can we respond to this cry in practical ways? Let me suggest a few possibilities.

As Eucharistic people, we might begin by considering how we can bring concerns for the care and stewardship of nature into our weekly liturgical celebrations. Some ways would be to bring such concerns into the penitential rite at the beginning of Mass, or highlighting how the offertory can make us aware of our interconnectedness with nature and the relationship between nature and work; we can make conscious efforts to include in the prayer of the faithful issues and needs concerning the environment.

Church decorations, banners and liturgical environment during the year can keep these concerns before the people. And, of course, the homily during the Mass can be a big help to the faithful in raising consciousness as to our responsibilities.

In the recent Precious Blood Congress on the Environment in Lima, Peru, the need for education on issues related to the care of nature was repeatedly stressed. Themes on the proper stewardship of the environment can be developed and woven into the catechetical programs at all levels in schools, CCD and in adult education classes.

The Social Doctrine of the Church should become an integral part of our evangelization efforts. Church bulletin boards and the weekly parish bulletin can be utilized more effectively to keep the issues before the people. The parish can also organize community action projects of their own or can actively support city/nation-wide campaigns in this respect.

Besides these community based possibilities, all of us can participate through lifestyle changes. Pope Benedict XVI in his recent Encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, on the social dimension of our faith, calls for “a reform of life styles and the re-education of consumer choices,” and invites us to rein in our unbridled consumption and consumerism and to adopt lifestyles based on self-restraint and moderation. The pope insists that it is not only laws and business practices that have to change, but lifestyles as well. He calls Christians to lead by example, offering proof through the simplicity of their own lives that they believe what they say, and that it’s possible to be happy and fulfilled while living in ways that respect the inner dynamics of creation (cf. #50-51).

These apparently small-scale actions are crucial for laying the foundations for change at the national and international level. Both paths are necessary for the restoration of a healthy relationship with our world. To quote the famous words of St. Maria De Mattias, we are called by the Blood of Christ to be prophets “of that new order of things which Christ came to establish with his Precious Blood.” In order to give credible witness to that new order, we need to undertake a journey of conversion, as the redeeming Blood purifies and reconciles us of all that obstructs living faithfully in the bond that we profess.

The God of the covenant provides nourishment for our journey. When we gather around the Eucharistic Table to break bread and to drink from a common cup, we strengthen our covenant bond with God, with one another and with all of creation. We renew our commitment to one another and we accept with joy the mission of being “go’els,” guardians and defenders of the covenant,

furthering authentic community and covenant bonding in a fragmented society and in a world so often raped and ravaged of its resources.

The God of the Scriptures is a God of the covenant who clearly heard the cry of the poor and the oppressed and the cry of the exploited earth. Moved to compassion and called to solidarity by the cry of their

In order to give credible witness to that new order, we need to undertake a journey of conversion, as the redeeming Blood purifies and reconciles us of all that obstructs living faithfully in the bond that we profess.

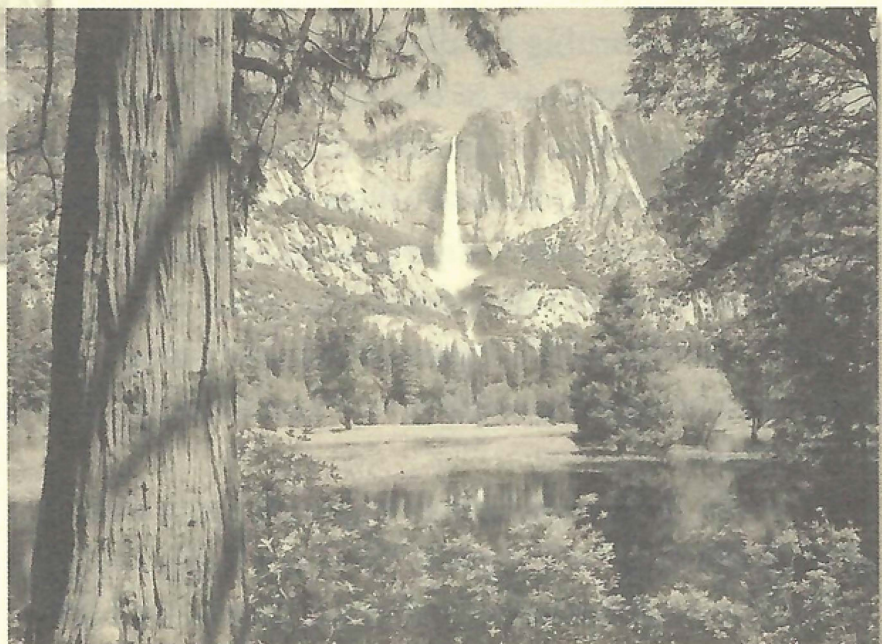
blood, God gave the ultimate, loving response in the person of Jesus, the Redeemer and *Go'el*. Reflecting on Paul's letter to the Romans—in which Paul writes that the world itself will one day become a form of living worship—the Holy Father, during a July 24th Vespers service in the Cathedral of Aosta in northern Italy, said: “It's the great vision that later Teilhard de Chardin also had: At the end we will have a true cosmic liturgy, where the cosmos becomes a living host. Let's pray to the Lord that he help us be priests in this sense, to help in the transformation of the world in adoration of God, beginning with ourselves.”



Ordained a priest in Chile in 1973, Precious Blood Father Barry Fischer exercised his ministry there and in Guatemala until 1995. He served the Missionaries of the Precious Blood as General Councilor for six years before serving as Moderator General for two terms from 1995-2007. He currently lives in Salzburg, Austria where he is the Director of the newly-founded International Center of Precious Blood Spirituality.

For Reflection

- How can we draw out the ecological consequences of the Eucharistic celebration for our lives?
- How can we help our fellow Catholics discover the social dimension of the Eucharist?
- Identify changes you can make in the “life” dimensions: economic, social, and spiritual.



The Day I Almost Died

by Gretchen Bailey

Did I tell you I almost died? On April 23, 2009, on the I-980-880 interchange in northern California where people speed on curves, passing one another without much thought or even sight. Some drivers only know they must change lanes to get from “here” to “there.” But sometimes the desire to get to “there” is so absorbing that they leave other drivers in the “here” eating their gusts of dust.

My all-absorbing “there” a year ago last April was a compilation of things that spun in my head as I drove along—taxes, mortgage, children, marriage and a pit bull puppy that someone tossed from a car into the street in front of my home. (Mine is the home on the corner that has a cracked foundation, needs a coat of paint but has a patch of rosemary and lavender in the front that is drought resistant.) It’s funny how you make sure your yard can tough-out arid days yet not prepare the self for a parched soul. Part of that preparation is to know that drought is part of a normal cycle, especially when one is being blown about like a great tumble weed, rolling round and round seemingly aimless, yet spreading seeds as it bumbles along.

That morning I walked to Santa Isabel for a baptism. The voice of the priest was broadcast in the street because there were so many families inside. Young girls in white satin dresses and *chanclas* clicked up and down the aisle followed by little brothers in suits and cowboy boots. Mothers tried to keep little ones clean, wiping noses and collecting contraband *paletas* before they stained white shirts. The priest spoke in a voice just loud enough to pierce the din of the *responsabilidad* of being a *buen Catolico*, telling the parents to bring their children to Mass on Sundays, urging them gently not to disappear.

My three sons have disappeared from church. Instead they jog, surf or walk the dog. I tell myself, “God can be found in the woods, by the sea and in the neighborhood.” After the ceremony, I left Santa Isabel on foot,

past the newly baptized and the clicking cameras, past people who were tending gardens, whacking weeds and drinking beer. I thought of my sons and the empty pew that would be mine on Sunday morning. "God is in fairy rings of redwood trees. God is in the waves," I told myself. "How can you not think of God when you see a pair of dolphins swimming or when your feet are washed by a succession of rolling waves that only ends when you choose to walk away?"

It was at this point that I tripped over a pit-bull puppy who had wandered between my feet. He rolled on his back and exposed his pink belly, his wagging tail knocking against my ankle. I asked the neighbors if they might know the owner. *Nada*. I put him in our backyard with water and chow, got the car keys and headed off to the baptismal fiesta that promised *pozole*, a food of celebration (requiring a day of preparation) found at New Year's, First Communions and Baptisms.

I steeled myself for the drive down High Street past the Valero gas station where a guy was shot the week before. I drove fast and merged onto

There's probably a reason taxes are due in spring. If they were due in the gray of winter, many would just choose to give up all hope.

the freeway behind a truck. Even the freeway is pretty in April. Trees are the lime green of spring. The foliage on the islands that separate frontage roads are not yet baked brown by the Mediterranean summer. Plants grow in the cracks along the shoulder. April, the Octave of Easter, and taxes were

past due. There's probably a reason taxes are due in spring. If they were due in the gray of winter, many would just choose to give up all hope.

Thinking of taxes, wayward children and abandoned puppies as I drove, I realized that I was tired. The kind of tired that makes you want to press a button and disappear into thin air. Seemingly out of that same thin air my peripheral vision caught a silver pick-up truck heading across the adjacent lanes towards me. We were on a curve. Not just any curve. This was a curve, a merge and an off-ramp at the far-right of six lanes of speeding cars and semi trucks heading to the Port of Oakland. The driver of the pick-up wanted to exit the freeway and I was in his way.

A merge is something for which you can plan. You see it coming. It is clear and imminent like a thunderstorm at the end of a series of muggy days. Yet, merges and sudden turns take us by surprise sometimes, like heart attacks and unplanned pregnancies. Maybe it is because we don't care to see the signs or deal with the consequences down the road. Maybe it is because we are not asking ourselves the important questions like, "God, where am I going? Where are You calling me to go?" Sometimes we just go along and

don't hear that word or phrase in the *Lectio Divino* that is the book of our life. We just close the book and run in circles going about the business of staying alive.

The driver sped in front of me almost clipping my left front bumper. I swerved. I did not think or plan. I just grabbed the wheel and turned to the right in my all-wheel drive vehicle, which I trusted implicitly would do what I told it to do. Instead, it veered left. I rode on two wheels. I hung onto the wheel and braked—bad mistake on a curve while you turn. My brakes screamed. The car and I began to roll to one side, then the other, and then sideways. I was cinched tight in my seat, my neck flat against the head rest. I braced as the car rolled over and over and over again across three lanes, up a curb, sliding on the car's side, spinning in slow circles back down the on-ramp into on-coming traffic. The driver's side of the car ground gravel and glass as it spun out its momentum.

The engine was still running though nothing was engaged, save my fingers which were still clenched fast to the steering wheel as if I could still go somewhere. I flexed my hands, tested my toes and looked for blood. There was none. I reached to turn off the engine but the ignition was out of my grasp since the impact had forced my seat belt to make me one with the driver's seat and the car was resting on its side.

I unbuckled myself and killed the engine. It hissed and sizzled as if it knew it breathed its last. A man's voice spoke, "Hello?"—as if he were speaking to someone who might indeed be dead. "I'm fine," I answered. "No injuries." He peeled back the windshield that had cracked into tiny cubes of glass and I stepped out through it onto the ground. The doors were buckled and crimped into the frame. I thanked my guardian angels, deceased

ancestors, the Trinity and the steel box that had saved my life. Good Samaritans left their cars and children buckled tight by the freeway and came running to help. Highway patrolmen picked up quarters that were strewn along the on-ramp (my husband's parking change). Another handed me a CD case scuffed and torn with cracked sonatas and songs gouged apart by gravel and tar, and my Bible, remarkably intact, its thin pages barely ruffed, as though it knew it would survive. I wanted to ask if he had found it open to a particular page in the middle of the Market Street on ramp.

A man's voice spoke, "Hello?" as if he were speaking to someone who might indeed be dead. "I'm fine," I answered, "No injuries." He peeled back the windshield that had cracked into tiny cubes of glass and I stepped out through it onto the ground.

I called my son with the deputy's phone. "I'm fine," I said. "Car's not. Call dad."

Paramedics and fire engines rolled up with wailing sirens. I signed a release while a fireman took my blood pressure, which was slightly elevated. I was glad to have blood pressure. I was glad to have blood and a heartbeat. A guy named Lester towed our car to a wrecking yard. I had asked him if he might tow it to our mechanic. He replied, "Ma'am, that car ain't goin' anywhere ever again."

A patrolman asked me, "Do you know that man over there?" A bearded, white-haired man sat in the driver's seat of a rental car. "That's my husband." Somehow, within fifteen minutes he had managed to rent a car and find me right there in the milieu of the 980-880 interchange. That's love. He drove me home. We returned the rental car after dropping off the puppy at the pound on Sunday afternoon. The puppy had parvo.

We've been without a car for a year. The weather dictates our comfort levels for the commute. Sunset, sunrise, wet, dry, light, dark, head wind, tail wind, hot, cold. The time used to get from here to there can be a gentle transition from home to work in the morning mist, or a gauntlet run past garbage trucks and SUVs. When you can't get from here to there without expending your own body's energy, you might just stay in the "here."

Listen to your body, to the birds, to the wind, to the seasons. Feel all of it.

Listen to your body, to the birds, to the wind, to the seasons. Feel all of it. Somewhere there is a message, a voice, an image that is for you alone. Walk with the Word open to you. Don't close the book, and remember that the Word walks with you, rides with you. You will be prepared for the merge. If you are on a way that is dry, open your eyes, feel the earth beneath your feet. You're most likely standing on a seed.

If you find yourself in a car, hurrying without a thought, given to what you are doing and where you are going, ask, "Who pays with their blood so that we can get from here to there with so much ease?" Somewhere there are fishermen without fish, farmers and families using water poisoned by extracting the oil that powers our journey. Somewhere there are soldiers without legs and mothers without sons.

Stop. Walk. Ride a bike if you can. Listen. There is a cry. The soil of the earth runs crimson in countries far away. Dry your clothes outside. Turn off everything for a while. Do you hear it, the Mother's cry?

It is one with the voice of the Son.



Precious Blood Companion Gretchen Bailey lives in Oakland, CA. "I used to like to fish," she writes. "Now I just watch creatures swim. I have three fine sons, none of which are currently incarcerated, and one husband who loves the three fine sons and me. My favorite prayer is, 'Everything I have is yours.' The Father said that to the prodigal son. The spiritual work left to me is praying it and meaning it."

