

Following the MorningStar...30 Years Later

by Julie D. Keefer

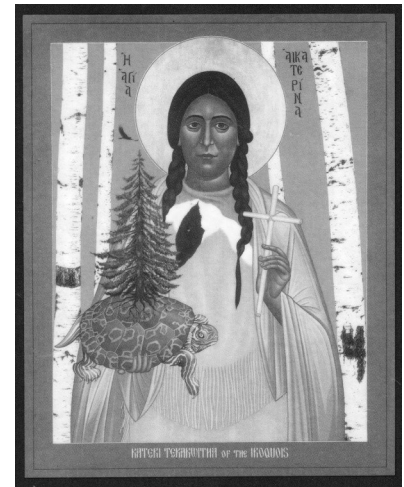
It has been clear to us these many years that those bringing to bear the vision of right relationship to life still face great challenges in a culture resistant to the values of the soul. Among the values of the soul are vulnerability, paradox, solitude, self-reflection, passion, truth, authenticity, mindfulness, humility, compassion, and unconditional love.

These are also values which pave the way to the regeneration and embodiment of love in our lives. Through experiencing these values, we grow into our True Self, who we are designed to be with the unique gifts which we are blessed to bring to life. Soul values are what enable our lives to grow deep in the soil of unconditional love and loving. They lead us to our wholeness.

Without our self-protective systems of ego breaking open and without the experience of falling into deep emotional and/or physical pain which reveal our fears, incompleteness, grief, unmet needs, and other painful realities, we tend not to give time for waking up to what our lives are meant to be about in the deepest and highest of dimensions of love and creative Beingness. Yet, we have a choice to accept what happens as a mirror revealing the hidden aspects and unmet needs of our souls, or we can choose to turn away in fear and denial and miss the golden moments when awareness and truth are revealed and a more conscious acceptance of our vulnerable soul and its challenges in life occur. Pe-

riods of darkness are where the deep pearls of humble truth await recognition and where we become more real and authentic people. Our souls have needs that reason cannot abide. It takes time, courage, and hard choices to forge the character of our soul's innate potential for creative good. Not doing so, we risk the opposite: soul loss, a loss of connection with the essence of who we are; our unique authenticity. By way of truth and trust in the higher realms of transformative love, we rise from the ashes of fear, doubt, and illusion to meet our True Self in union with God, who is everywhere.

Recognizing the continued critical need for more people to courageously engage their soul lives, MorningStar continues, after 30 years, to offer resources for those seeking to deepen into their journey towards wholeness and love.



Kateri Tekawitha of the Iroquois
by Robert Lentz

What is this place that soothes and speaks
Such gentle truth?

What is this sanctuary that saturates grace,
Shields and sustains?

It is a gift within a gift ~
Spirit beyond spirit~
and something much more....



~from a M* cabin journal

It is the suffering already present in the world which we can either ignore or identify with. If pain were not real, if it were not the lot of so many, the way of the cross would be pathological. But in our world with its hungry and homeless and hopeless, it is pathological to live as if pain did not exist. The way of the cross means letting pain carve one's life into a channel through which the healing stream of the spirit can flow to a world in need.

Parker Palmer, *The Promise of Paradox*

M* News and Needs

Winter into spring was a challenge this year with heavy snows and winds bringing lots of tree and limb pruning to our forest. The good news is that we have lots of wood for heat next year!

We have set an intent to find a person or a couple who would like an extended time for discernment of a life transition or a work study sabbatical and who would like to live in community with us. This person would need to have practical skills in some of these areas: maintenance, cleaning, outdoor work, computer technology, group facilitation skills. For their work for MorningStar and a minimal/negotiable rent dependent on skills and time offered, we would exchange housing at Morning Glory with bathroom, shower, and laundry privileges, along with access to our extensive library at RoseWind.

Current cabin needs: good used blankets, pillows, and pillow cases, bed covers for single, double, and queen. Eco Toilet bowl cleaner, hand soap, two new fireproof hearth rugs, used ink or toner cartridges, large file cabinet, rustic deck chairs, lawn chairs. (We can reweave seats on worn but sturdy lawn chairs.)

Reflection on Response-Ability

by Chris Gaidica



Chris is a member of our MorningStar Friday Meditation Circle and MorningStar web host. He reflected on a quote by Carlos Carretto: "God's call is mysterious; it comes in the darkness of faith. It is so fine, so subtle, that it is only with the deepest silence within us that we can hear it."

Chris responds: If this is true, I wonder why. Seems either God is too weak to be "loud" enough for me to hear, or I'm too "loud" to hear him/her speak. Regarding the latter, perhaps I'm in the way. Not "in the way" in a negative way, but in a noisy, chatter-in-the-head, ego-going-rampant, lack-of-being-honest-with-myself sort of way. All I can do is be "responsible" for my part.

And in regards to being "responsible," on my drive home from our gathering this morning, I thought of how the word "responsible" came up a few times. Often I cringe when I hear the word because I equate it with "doing more." Doing more than I feel like doing. Doing more than I'm currently doing. I'm often sick and tired of "being responsible," even though the Puritan ethic tells me it's the right/righteous thing to do. Then it dawned on me. For where I'm at in my life, I don't need to be "more adult," do more of the "right things," etc. For me, to be "responsible" is to be honest with myself, honest with my feelings, honest with trusted ones, etc. Doing that doesn't mean I'll always do the "right thing," the "noblest thing," etc. It means whatever I'm doing, I'm doing it with integrity, from the gut. My insides and outsides will match more. I don't want to do more. I want to be more whole. I want to be more integrated. For me it means, in real time, trusting my feelings and responses from a place inside me that leads to the actions I then take, even if those actions at times are "irresponsible." So, I decided I'm going to look at the word "responsible" in a different way. To me now, it's not "responsible" anymore. To me, it is now "response-able." It's not "responsibilities." It's "response-ability."

I assume I will generally be a "responsible" person the rest of my life, even if I don't think about it, so, I would rather work on being more "response-able," being able to feel and respond in a more open, full, integrated, real, messy, meaningful way, than more "responsible" any day.

I wonder what it would be like to be "response-able" during the times of the "deepest silence within us" that the quote refers to. My guess is that would be quite something... ☺

"I thank the long lineage
of women
who wove this peace,
who spun this grace
for me, a man, to rest
in this sacred place."

~from a M* cabin journal

Please consider ordering your books through the Cottage Book Shop, an independently owned bookstore in Glen Arbor, Michigan. When you mention M*, owner Barbara Siepker will generously donate 10% of the sale to M* and provide free shipping!

www.cottagebooks.com
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Thank you, Barbara!



"Oh, There I Go Again"

Waking Meditation

by Mary Weber

I discovered this meditation practice online, and the basic form is attributed to Neale Donald Walsch, author of Conversations with God. I have embellished it a little.

It is a widely-held spiritual belief that we are all connected and a psychological truth that what we react to in another, positively or negatively, is often also a part of ourselves which we may not yet see (projection). This meditation incorporates these two aspects to help increase our awareness of our connection and similarity with others and increase knowledge and acceptance of our hidden selves.

When I do a sitting meditation, I sometimes focus on my breath, attempting to empty my mind. Of course I catch my mind wandering, plotting, judging, making grocery lists...thinking. So I say to myself within my mind, "thinking," with no judgment or condemnation, just awareness, and return to my breath.

Waking meditation is a similarly gentle practice, but it most often will take place in a public space or at a social gathering or even watching the news whenever I encounter another's words or actions that attract or repel me. For instance, I am in line at the grocery store, happily in my own thoughts, when someone I don't know starts talking to me as if they have known me forever, and I feel irritation. I can say to myself, "Oh, there I go again sharing my story without asking the other if they have the time or inclination to listen." And the awareness comes that I have done that when I was feeling lonely or excited. Or another scenario: I'm watching the news and hear that a politician has been caught in a lie. My first thought is, "I am better than that!" But then I say, "Oh, there I go again lying." Yes, I lie sometimes...I am human. I get fearful of others' opinions or worried about not having enough or ashamed of some action, and I lie. In this meditation I don't condone or condemn the action in myself or the other, but I accept the reality of it with compassion for all humans.

I have also seen people going out of their way to be kind to others and I can say, "Oh, there I go again being loving!" This meditation practice has helped me to be in the world and with myself with more gentleness and compassion. I offer it for the possibility that it will open you in a similar way.



"We have to learn to say "no" to stay with the conflict of whatever is pulling us away from ourselves--- whether it be an affair, food, alcohol, drugs, compulsive work, cleaning, or shopping. As we hold that crucifixion position, being pulled one way and at the same time the other way, that conflict stretches us and we begin to build our own container and start to come into our own bodies. Here, we will learn to experience the trapped energy in matter, the energy of anger, grief, despair, and rage. We don't want to own this energy because we don't want to feel it. We call it "Shadow" and by not owning it and by not feeling it, we are disembodied and disempowered. Without being in our bodies, we cannot speak our truth because we are only yapping heads."

Judy Jackson

"Consciousness: Looking Back. Looking Forward"

Love Comes

Love comes
in the most humble
of circumstances and attitudes:

In openness
and detachment
In non-possessiveness
and in poverty
In emptiness
and in longing
In grief
and in sorrow

Love comes
and makes a Home

-JDK



My Cathedral Has No Ceiling

Full rising sun dissolving every limb's hoar-frost
Deer prints and glitter rainbows on crystal-laden snow
Hoarse caw-talk of crows in treetops
Full moon night; blue-cast world
Songs of childhood praise echo softly
in the background of my mind,
"Holy, holy, holy!"
My cathedral has no ceiling.

-MEW 2/5/2012



Wilderness Journal

by Julie D. Keefer

"When we are alone on a starlit night, when by chance we see the migrating birds in autumn descending on a grove of junipers to rest and eat; when we see children in a moment when they are really children, when we know love in our own hearts; or when, like the Japanese poet, Basho, we hear an old frog land in a quiet pond with a solitary splash--at such times the awakening, the turning inside out of all values, the 'newness,' the emptiness and the purity of vision that make themselves evident, all these provide a glimpse of the cosmic dance."

Thomas Merton was a monk and writer with great depth of spiritual wisdom and was one of my early guideposts for my spiritual journey because he carried within himself the integration of both the rational and mystical. He was able to experience the mystical dimension of the sacredness of life, as the quote reflects, as well as having the clear ability to name that experience. He spoke deep wisdom to a world embroiled in the Viet Nam war. It was during that time a TV war image of a young girl running naked, weeping, and on fire, a victim of napalm, seared my heart. My conscious mind forever changed with the wrenching recognition of our mutual humanity in those moments of her suffering. It was a numinous moment for me of being part of the Cosmic Dance that binds all life together as one. It shattered the "them and us" notion inside of me, although it took many more years for that seed of truth to grow into more layers of integrated understanding of the complex reality of the paradoxes of life.

I was being led by Spirit to be willing to hold the tension of opposite aspects of myself, of others, and of life itself to learn non-judgment; to walk a more true and self-honest path in life. It meant being willing to accept and suffer pain in order to learn how to love. This psycho-spiritual journey has been unfolding in me for over 30 years as I have sought to intentionally nurture that journey through my contemplative lifestyle and inner work, and my work of service in the world. It has not been an easy journey, but an amazing adventure of coming to know, accept, and love myself and the Love, Mercy, and Grace in which I am held. It is taking a long time for this new foundation of integrating the paradoxical nature of life to be strong enough to bear the sweet golden honey of wholeness and wisdom that it promises, as opposed to just buzzing around looking for it! It demands strength to surrender egoic attachments to old back and white, either/or ways of thinking until the new foundation is strong enough to bear the weight of the new honey I am to become.

At this time on the planet, it seems to me we are all becoming subject to the death of the soul-destroying

judgments and ways of constructing life which have produced the social, environmental, health, economic, and political crises we face. I believe we are slowly coming to our human and spiritual senses that know the old egoic ways of manipulation and control based on judgment of right or wrong, good or evil, privileged or poor, sacred or ordinary need to be transformed into new forms of conscious, compassionate awareness of understanding through right relationship with the human and divine in ourselves and one another. This old paradigm of judgment and control must give way for this new spiritual and soulful emergence of heaven on earth to become embodied on this planet. I believe it is a work of grace, mercy, and forgiveness as our hearts are being broken open through painful changes and losses that we are collectively experiencing. As old foundations are wiped away, the way of the cross, if accepted and embodied, bears the consciousness of new life on the new foundation of wholeness and unconditional loving. The question is: are we becoming more willing, if not forced, to risk trusting the new foundation of non-judging compassion for self and others for the sake of a more personal and collective sanity for our soul's and earth's salvation; the "new heaven and new earth"?

It also seems clear to me that the religious and psycho-spiritual maps of the human journey can only be understood and embodied by being on the journey and by awakening to these changes, while becoming present to what these changes are asking of us. We need to use our all faculties: instinct, senses, thinking, feeling, and intuition operating in one accord in reality to discern what IS; and make choices that are true and authentic for us, but not over or against another's authentic truth. The conscious journey validates the experience of the holy where we come to learn just how interconnected we are in our human needs, longings, and messiness. No amount of debating the existence of God or the holy in life or the need to be on the journey will change the heart of life on Earth. It will only change through entering the Cosmic Dance itself! This is what it means to *know* God, not just knowing *about* God, and to ultimately become one with the Cosmos by being who we most deeply and authentically are in God; both divine and human, both male and female, both light and dark, both spirit and earth, both love and fear, right where we are. In Christian terms, Christ is made manifest in and through us as we surrender our egoic attachment to old ways of judging ourselves and others and receive the grace to let a new foundation of unconditional love and wisdom to be forged. Care to Dance?



On Dayspring Path: The Sacred in the Ordinary

by Mary EWeber

On the last day of winter 2012, an unseasonably warm and windy day, I hung my laundry on the line. I don't think I've ever been able to begin that ritual this early in Michigan. For me it is a deeply satisfying and wonderfully sensual experience. It connects me psychically to generations of women doing the honorable work of caring for self and family and the earth. It connects me to my own history/herstory.

I find hanging clothes outdoors is a full body experience. I revel in the feel of the sun and wind on my skin. Each piece of clothing, damp from washing, has a particular fabric feel. I smell the warm pine needles under my feet and the moist, clean scent of the newly washed clothes. I hear the birds, the wind snapping the clothes, the insect near my ear, the silence of meditative work. So much pleasure in the colors and shapes flapping in the breeze; the orderliness of it all: like-with-like, yet rainbows of color. The sight of sheets sailing high with the help of a homemade clothes pole brings me delight. I feel fully alive! I drift into timeless time, and then I travel...

I am 5 again...

Grandpa Jim, a retired milkman, is stringing the clothesline on "wash day" from the brick two-story house, across the postage stamp sized backyard, to the side of the white-washed garage that runs along the alley in Chicago. Back and forth he walks, pulling tight the lines in preparation. He sets out the self-made clothes poles, and he hooks the cloth clothespin bag on the line. Now he even strings a small piece of line really low, so I can be Gram's good helper.

In the basement, Gramma Gertie moves the wet laundry from the tub through the attached hand wringer. My job is to be sure each piece drops into the wicker basket and not onto the floor; important work for a 5 year old...

Sliding forward in time...now, 26...

As a young mother in the late 70's, I make sure my yard has a clothes line. Sunny spring morning, the baby in the playpen, and a line full of white, cloth diapers: Heaven! A little too young to be part of the hippie movement, but old enough to have taken an active part in the first Earth Day as a high school senior, and being a young woman trained in the sciences, I am aware of the mounting evidence that our choices are impacting the earth. Disposable diapers are all the rage! Fierce love for my children's health and well-being and for the environment they will grow up in, the scientific evidence of the time, and everyday common sense, leads me to breastfeed my children, make their baby food from scratch, recycle everything possible, and wash their cloth diapers letting the sun sterilize them and the wind make them soft. I do not see myself as an environmental warrior; I am just doing what makes sense to me and what I love to do.



I am home again, in the now...

Bending low, I pick up the next clean treasure from my basket and snap it from its crumpled form to a line-worthy state. Bending again, I gather two clothespins from the bucket and, stretching high and tall, even to tip-toes where the ground dips away from the line, I clip the piece smooth and taut. The first batch of clothes is already dry, and I begin to remove and fold them and place them in my basket. Seeing the clothes clean and neatly folded, I feel a strong sense of satisfaction in the work completed and in general. Life is good!

That evening, crawling into bed, the whole experience rushes back into my being as I breathe in all the outdoors trapped in my pillowcase. I know that hanging clothes outside to dry is a definite benefit for the environment and for my body. And, maybe more so, a true delight for my soul!



"A mature creative life, which has discovered its source, finds it is linked to everything. Creation actually requires too little from us, and there is not much in our culture that teaches us to pay attention to the things that require less. These things give birth to the unpredictable surprises that inspire a larger and deeper soul connection with creative life. With the soul well tended, even when all is lost, our creation lives larger than its physical limits. The best that any of us can do with the heaven and hell that surrounds us is to become willing participants in the unfolding of our soul's life. Any creative act emerging from this tending becomes one with the elements of the Mystery."

~Judy Collins

2012 Retreats



LISTENING TO YOUR LIFE RETREAT

Facilitated by Julie Keefer

May 5, 10 am to 5 pm

This retreat is an invitation for your body and mind to slow down enough to connect with your heart and listen to what needs some interior attention for clarity in your journey. Ways will be offered to center and open to this experience of deeper listening. We will start by gathering in circle before moving into personal time in nature and/or exploring the labyrinths or other places of contemplation and reflection. We will then gather in circle for sharing whatever wants to be shared from the day's experience. Bring a journal and a mat or towel to sit on outside. If it rains, we will use alternative methods of listening and reflecting.

Suggested donation for the retreat and lunch: \$40-45. With one night: \$75-80, two nights \$110-115

NOTE: Listening to Your Life with guidance from Julie can be scheduled for yourself as a personal or small group retreat upon request.

DREAMS: A GATEWAY TO TRUTH

Facilitated by Inie Bijkerk and Julie Keefer

Saturday June 2nd, 10 am to 5 pm



It looks as if there is within us a superior intelligence which we could call an inner guide or a divine inner center which produces the dreams, and that the aim of dreams seems to be an optimum of life for the individual. They show us where we are wrong; they show us where we are unadapted; they warn us about danger; they predict some future events; they hint at the deeper meaning of our life; and they convey to us illuminating insights. Dreams point to your back, to what you don't see, and you have to stand on your head....to understand your own dreams.

Marie-Louise von Franz

"If we take the time to learn their language, we discover that every dream is a masterpiece of symbolic communication. The unconscious speaks in symbols, not to confuse us, but simply because that is its native idiom." ~Robert Johnson, Inner work

All over the world, all through history, people have regarded dreams, however differently they might approach them, in similar ways. Dreams were seen as giving wise counsel for living right, healing, and transformation. They were revered as a manifest link between secular and sacred, human and divine. We will utilize a variety of approaches to explore and honor the wisdom of our dreams and their symbolic language, by tapping into the rich associations of the group, as well as by taking some time for journaling, drawing. Bring a dream or incubate one overnight.

Inie is a therapist who has worked with her own dreams for 50 years and with other people's dreams for over 30 years.

Suggested retreat donation: \$40. Includes lunch and an optional gentle face massage. With one overnight, \$70, two nights, \$95. (open to women only)

Registration deadline: May 28, 2012

ELDER WOMEN'S GATHERING

Wednesdays May 9, August 8, November 7

9:30 am to 4:30 pm

Women will come together to share and be inspired by the ways we approach the last third of our lives.

Please send a registration donation of \$5 with your email address and telephone number as soon as possible, as space is limited to 15. Lunches will be pot luck. Further free-will donations for the day are welcomed, but not necessary.



For more info, email: morningstar.retreatcenter@gmail.com or call: 231-768-4368, 231-884-2789

COURTING THE SOUL: AN ART-PLAY ADVENTURE

August 11, 10 am to 5 pm

Facilitated by Rebecca Kirk & Katie Reitemeier

This workshop will feature multi-media art play and spacious reflective time in nature.

Parker Palmer writes that in order to encounter the soul, one must approach it with the same patient commitment with which one would expect to encounter a wild creature in the woods. One would step tiptoe into the quiet and expect to sit, wait and observe. With exceptional patience and silence, one can clear the way for Soul to show up, but it cannot be done in noise and haste.

Join us for a contemplative Courting of the Soul. Set in the quiet of the MorningStar forest, we will bring together personally symbolic objects from the formative chapters of our lives and use our art to connect them to the interweaving thread of Soul. While our "selves" may appear to change from life stage to life stage, our Soul seems somehow constant. Who is that unchanging one? How can knowing her better open us to greater aliveness and purpose?

Registration deadline: July 10, 2012.

Suggested donation: \$50, including Saturday lunch, creative materials, and an optional gentle face massage.

With retreat and one night: \$80, two nights: \$105. (open to women and men)

Shadow Work® WORKSHOP

November 3, 9 am to 5 pm

Facilitated by Shadow Work® certified leaders Dennis Hartwell and Jody Biehl



Shadow Work® is a way to bring your true self out of shadow and into the light. It's a way of transforming parts of your self that you'd like to change, and doing so with compassion and understanding.

Shadow Work® includes a set of facilitated processes that allow individuals to explore and evolve, and to change almost any behavior pattern safely, by choice and without pressure from the facilitators.

In a Shadow Work® process the participant is first asked, "What do you want to have happen here?" From this point on, the participant determines the direction, depth and pace of the process, and the facilitators "lead by following."

In Shadow Work® the facilitators honor any risks the participant has, and any choices the participant makes, because we believe that the best facilitator is the participant's own "internal facilitator." For more information: www.ShadowWork.com.

Registration requires that you contact one of the facilitators: Judy: (231) 946-1351, jabiehl@charter.net; Dennis: (231) 946-1351, DennisHartwell@charter.net. Once you have confirmation of your registration for the workshop with Dennis or Judy, send your registration fee of \$50 to MorningStar. You will need to bring your own lunch. Coffee, tea, and snacks will be provided.

To book a cabin for one night including retreat: \$80, two nights: \$105. (open to women and men)



MorningStar "Roots and Wings" 30th Anniversary Celebration

September 29, 10 am to 5 pm

Our vision for this celebration is a great potluck reunion to reunite people with people who have appreciated and benefited from MorningStar's presence with its cabins, land, offerings and connections. And to share some of the rich experiences and stories that have helped deepen roots of self-knowledge which supported the wings with which to offer self to life in more authentic ways.

There will be a dedication of the house in honor of Elise's 22-plus-year contribution at MorningStar which included co-purchasing of land with Julie and building, with Jim Peterson's Wood Song Builders, her home. The house has been re-named "RoseWind" to honor the Divine Feminine Spirit in all life, and Elise, whose first name is Rosalie, as was her mother's name. Elise plans to be here for our celebration and this dedication.

We hope you can join us for this celebration! Please bring a dish for the potluck, story for the afternoon circle time, music and instruments for some fun songs and improvisation. There will be plenty of time for a walk in the woods or the labyrinths, or just enjoying getting to know others. We will also be providing coffee and tea, etc.

Send registration for retreats with suggested donation to: 20564 MorningStar Trail, LeRoy, MI 49655

Contact us at: morningstar.retreatcenter@gmail.com or by phone: 231-884-2789 or 231-768-4368

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SPIRIT,
That hears each one of us
Hears all that is -
Listens, listens, hears us out -
Inspire us now!
Our own pulse beats
in every stranger's throat.
And also there within
The flowered ground
Beneath our feet.
Teach us to listen!
We can hear it in water,
in wood...and even stone.
We are earth of this earth,
and bone of its bone.
For we have forgotten this
And so the earth is perishing.
-Barbara Deming



Please consider contributing a free-will donation in support of our newsletter. Thank you!