

To Love our Sacred Earth

a 4-part fall 2023 retreat series on zoom - guided by Maureen Wild, SC

**retreat webinars exploring teachings within the writings of Thomas Berry
as they interweave with the wisdom of nature-centered mystics and of nature-inspired scientists**

1. Thursday, September 14th 10am-noon Central Time (8-10am Pacific, 11am-1pm Eastern, 12-2pm Atlantic)

Hildegard's *Viriditas* meets Thomas' Spirituality of Earth



A focus on Hildegard's concept of *Viriditas*, *the greening power of God*, merging with reflections on Thomas' essay *The Spirituality of Earth* - Earth's processes expressing an abiding numinous presence, an intrinsic spiritual quality from the beginning.

"The soul is a breath of living spirit, that with excellent sensitivity, permeates the entire body to give it life. Just so, the breath of the air makes the earth fruitful. Thus, the air is the soul of the earth, moistening it, greening it."
Hildegard of Bingen

"We should be listening to the stars in the heavens and the sun and the moon, to the mountains and the plains, to the forests and rivers and seas that surround us, to the meadows and the flowering grasses, to the songbirds and the insects and to their music especially in the evening and the early hours of the night. We need to experience, to feel, and to see these myriad creatures all caught up in the celebration of life."
Thomas Berry

2. Wednesday, October 4th 10am-noon Central Time (8-10am Pacific, 11am-1pm Eastern, 12-2pm Atlantic)

**Francis of Assisi and Thomas Berry on Intimacy with Nature
meet Suzanne Simard on New Ways to See and Know a Forest**



Francis communes and prays within nature and writes his psalm of praise *Canticle of the Creatures*.

“Be praised my Lord through Brothers Wind and Air, and clouds and storms, and all the weather, through which you give your creatures sustenance.” Francis of Assisi

Thomas has an early mystical experience in a meadow which shapes his orientation in life.

“It was an early afternoon in May when I first looked down over the scene and saw the meadow. The field was covered with lilies rising above the thick grass. A magic moment, this experience gave to my life something ... that seems to explain my life at a more profound level than almost any other experience.” Thomas Berry

Forest scientist, professor, Suzanne Simard pays deep attention to forests and discovers new understandings of their social network and hidden instructions for healing.

“This Mother Tree was the central hub that the saplings and seedlings nested around, with threads of different fungal species, of different colors and weights, linking them, layer upon layer, in a strong, complex web.” Suzanne Simard

Each encounter reveals growing bonds of intimacy and communion, intuitive and experiential knowing – even a sense of shamanic evocation – that strives to protect the intrinsic wisdom of nature.

3. Wednesday, October 25th 10am-noon Central Time (8-10am Pacific, 11am-1pm Eastern, 12-2pm Atlantic)

**Thomas on Guidance, and the Self-Healing of Earth,
meets Janine Benyus on Biomimicry**



Thomas points to humanity as being ‘lost’ and needing guidance. [Ch.15, Dream of the Earth] *‘We need to ask for guidance,’* he states, *‘hidden within our genetic coding ... ask for it from the Earth community ... ask for it from the universe.’* We turn our attention to *guidance* from the Earth community as expressed within Thomas’ essay, *Earth as Self-Healing*.

“The healing of the Earth Community has two basic dimensions that are intertwined. There is the need for the healing of the Earth as a whole. And there is the need for the healing of the human, considered as a particular species. In both related endeavors, the context for the healing is the universe as a whole. The powers of healing, the powers of regeneration, the powers of renewal are rooted in the primordial realities of the universe, the Earth, and the human species.” Thomas Berry

This is mirrored within the contemporary wisdom of biomimicry as articulated by natural science writer and innovation consultant, Janine Benyus. Biomimicry looks to the authentic *spontaneities within the wild* for solutions - solutions that emulate nature’s ways.

“Biomimicry is basically taking a design challenge and then finding an ecosystem that’s already solved that challenge, and literally trying to emulate what you learn.” Janine Benyus

4. Tuesday, November 14th 10am-noon Central Time (8-10am Pacific, 11am-1pm Eastern, 12-2pm Atlantic)

Teilhard's *Mass on the World* meets Thomas' *Cosmic Liturgy* and *Celebration*



The *Mass on the World* is one of Teilhard de Chardin's most mystical and poetic writings. His grand vision was the Eucharist and the Sacred Heart of Christ as the radiating center of the universe. For Teilhard, we live in the bosom of a great cosmic Eucharist.

"Since once again, Lord, I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols, up to the pure majesty of the real itself; I, your priest, will make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labors and sufferings of the world." Teilhard de Chardin

Thomas' vision is the entire universe as *the primordial sacred community*. He observed that we've developed celebrations for seasonal events (e.g., solstices and harvest) and liturgies, ceremonies, and traditions marking religious stories of faith (e.g., Christmas, Ramadan, Passover, Easter). But we've not yet begun to acknowledge and celebrate *the moments of grace in our grand cosmic liturgy*. For example, how might we celebrate the 1st generation star whose death as a supernova gave rise to the birth of our Sun, to Earth, life, the first flowers, consciousness, and so forth?

"The universe itself is the primordial sacred community. There's a grand liturgy that is performed by the universe, if we look on it with the eyes and the awareness of the sacred."
Thomas Berry