

Witness for the Earth

By Christine Loughlin, OP

On November 12th a tender thread of 300 folks weaved its way from Community church on East 35th Street to Dag Hammarskjold Plaza. Manhattan's towering buildings dwarfed our presence even more than the number of people streaming from them onto the sidewalks in search of a favorite local restaurant. We were a small ragtag group led by Buddhist monks drumming an awakening cry, guided by a few peace-keepers crossing intersections, and interspersed with a number of young students leafleting to those who would accept the flyer that reminded the crowds what day this was. "What are you marching for?" a businessman asked as he paused at the door of a café. Then he read the large button pinned on my jacket: *Religious witness for the Earth ~ walk and witness for climate and creation.*

On November 12, 1988 the United States and 83 other nations signed the Kyoto Protocol to address the dangers of global warming. Congress never ratified it and our present administration rejected it. In fact the common rallying cry we hear is—go out and shop, manufacturing jobs are on the rise, our economy recovers. Like the resolute beat of the monk's drumming come the stark facts—glaciers are melting, oceans are warming, infectious diseases are migrating, thousands of species of plants and animals are dying, a great suffering is already upon the poorest and the natural world.

As we wended our way through the masses a palpable sense of impossibility hung like a cloud. An image stirred. Our squiggly line was reminiscent of another minute incidence in the sea of time. That was a cooling period that allowed chemistry to get going, and chemistry allowed bonds to form and clever associations to emerge. One of those new associations, a molecule, determined a way to self-replicate. Before long, in Earth's story, the *primal soup* was filled with this innovative expression of life.

My mind wandered back to the words of a young woman from Iowa who had sat in our meeting room on the Sunday just past. She had traveled to Boston for the Food Security conference. Each participant shared incredible examples of dynamic changes they are witnessing in local growing and local food management. This woman, who bore the pain of the loss of a family farm, was fascinated by the notions of city gardens, bioregional food supply to prisons and grocery stores, garden projects in city school systems, community supported agriculture. She recognized recovery would not come in the return to the family farm she knew, but her soul resonated with the creative efforts of those who shared her passion for a food system that assures security for land and people.

Such resonance grows tangible. Our human presence on the planet dominates the *soup*. Eons ago a chemical invention took hold; now it is a cultural patterning. Before the cooling that brought forth chemistry, the underlying physics—the primal utterance—the Word manifest itself in creativity, communion, complexity. As each unfolding in the long Story exceeds the limits of communion, a catastrophic creativity arches toward deeper complexity. Now the loss is catastrophic. The ecstatic expressions of a living Earth—water, air, soils—reduced to product and resource for consumption.

The season of the long night is upon us and we are drawn to the inner activity of thinking that renews itself within winter's darkness. The ancients noted that the light in the heavens was born again on Earth. We place candles in the windows and throughout the house to acknowledge the light kindled in our human minds is the very Light reborn in cosmic wonder.

Our cherished religious and cultural celebrations are aligned with seasonal renewal. We must accept a new moment is upon us, an awakening to a deeper Truth guides our way. While our hearts linger in the pattern of seasonal celebrations, the spasm of extinctions cries out...embrace the sequential transformation moments in an emerging universe. In that embrace we receive The Story of an unfolding universe. The Story of self-emerging universe becomes our dominant sacred story.

Our orientation of the past must be reborn in the present. In the early foaming seas encoded units of genes brought forth new life; now memes—ideas, movements, associations, responses—resonate with possibilities. An urban food system echoes security for land and people for a young woman from Iowa. A squiggly line weaving through the throngs carries a message that one day will resonate out through the minds and souls of a whole nation and beyond—a gesture of reconciliation with the natural world.

The community of Crystal Spring thanks you for the many ways your life, your presence, your efforts, and most of all your friendship continue to create and contribute to the formation of all this is our Center. Your on-going support assures that we resonate the Dream that calls us on.

■ The Community of Crystal Spring