

# GREEN MOUNTAIN MONASTERY AND THE THOMAS BERRY SANCTUARY



## The Birth of Mr Pagi

During this past Fall I felt a pressing need to go out into our Milk Weed fields and find a monarch caterpillar in order to watch the amazing process of metamorphosis that these beings undergo. I did not find one while searching but mysteriously, a few days later shoveling compost, I looked down at a lone milkweed plant and lo and behold there was a beautiful yellow and black caterpillar feeding voraciously on its leaves.

I brought it into the monastery and placed it in a jar with milkweed. Amie (who is from Indonesia) suggested we name it Mr Pagi, meaning 'Morning' in Bahasa Indonesia. We accompanied Mr Pagi during a two week period through its stages of voracious eating, silent waiting and then finally on the morning of September 24, emergence into the altogether new form of monarch butterfly.

It took several hours for Mr Pagi to fly as its wings were full of water. Drip, drip, drip.....flap, flap, flap. Finally this little life in my hands took off and we witnessed first flight! It is a sacred moment to witness first flight in whatever form it takes: the birth of a new baby, the death of a loved one, the leap to a new level of consciousness, a new emergence for our global community.

I was thinking how awesome it is that Mr Pagi, through the mystery of his genetic coding and innate knowledge, knew what to do in the transformation process from caterpillar to butterfly and then flight and

journey from Vermont to the wintering grounds of the Mexican highlands.

Just as Mr Pagi had to tap into the deep recesses of his genetic wisdom to make his way forward, we as a human community have to do the same. This journey is what Thomas Berry called, 'The Great Work' of our time as we make that metamorphosis from separation to communion consciousness, shedding the skin of disconnection and emerging on the wings of radical relationality with the whole.

Blessings- Sr. Gail

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## Nature and the Human Soul

Thomas Berry was fond of saying, " It's all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story." Thomas was talking about story from the vantage point of knowing who we are within the large scale dynamics and 13.7 billion year trajectory of an unfolding universe. I recall the profound impact his book, The Great Work had on me and so many others in shifting our consciousness and giving us a new perspective of who we are and what our role is in this interconnected, vast and utterly relational cosmos.

This year, another book came my way which gave form and texture to Thomas Berry's challenge to , " re-invent ourselves at the species level." That book was, Nature and the Human Soul by Bill Plotkin. In the book, Plotkin talks about story too, but focuses his attention on the human life cycle as story. Using the image of the Wheel, he shows the evolution of human development on the way to becoming fully human in 8 acts and offers a map for reaching that destination.

Plotkin offers a model of how human development would unfold in what he calls a "Soulcentric, life-sustaining society" — a hypothetical one — and of how it can and does unfold now in our existing egocentric society.

The Wheel is ecocentric in that it models individual human development from the perspective of nature's cycles, rhythms, and patterns . . . The Wheel is also Soulcentric, in two ways.



First, it shows how the soul attempts to guide our individual development. Second, it envisions the principal goal of maturation to be the conscious discovery and embodiment of our souls for the sake of the whole.

What I found inspiring is that Plotkin offers us a way to progress from our current egocentric, aggressively competitive, consumer society to an ecocentric, soul-based one that is sustainable, cooperative, and compassionate.

Nature and the Human Soul offers a template for a more mature, fulfilling, and purposeful life — and a better world. I highly recommend this book.

Sr. Bernadette



When Places Meet: From  
Adelaide, Australia to  
Green Mountain  
Monastery and the  
Thomas Berry Sanctuary  
by Mary Kelson



You can't look out into the  
starry night sky of the  
Australian desert and not be  
touched and changed by its  
grandeur and stunning  
unashamed presence.

This experience is so beautifully expressed in the following words from the Australian poet and singer, Kavisha Mazzella, "... the sky is aching and full of glory, the shooting stars falling and shouting your story" (1). We are born of the stars, made of stardust and we share in each others' stories.

This night sky is the same one from where I emerged. I was shaped within the ancient fabric of the Australian landscape. I live in the Adelaide Hills in South Australia. These foothills stand as the gate keepers to the great expanse of inland deserts that give rise to geographical wonders, such as the Flinders Ranges and Uluru, the heart rock of Australia.

Today I am sitting in gentle sunshine, in a much younger and shyer land. My imagination is captured by the silent soundscape foregrounded by a distant brook. For the past six weeks I have been staying at Green Mountain Monastery in Vermont. Like a child I am awake to the freshness and newness of the surroundings - people, black lines of the spruce and pine, gentle sunshine, autumn and wintering trees, soft mosses, snow, rhythms of monastery life, food gardens, community of creatures present but rarely seen, and the presence of Thomas Berry cradled into the hillside. I am amazed and awed at how communion within landscape paints the creative dynamisms of form and culture. This relationship no doubt is deeply mutual and sacramental.

Every day I have pondered the question, 'How did I get to be here, what attracted me to Green Mountain Monastery?' In my thirties I watched *Canticle to the Cosmos* by Brian Swimme. In its attention to, and expression of evolutionary creativity, I found a language for my own conscious clumsiness in what I sensed to be an awesome unfolding act of spun grace. Swimme's articulation of the dynamics of the universe excited my cells, they danced and I was hooked. My understanding and experience of life, was in that moment forever changed and changing. This lead me to the work of Thomas Berry and others.

Today, some twenty years later, the art and science, pedagogy and poetry of the emergent and transcendent nature of matter and consciousness still makes my cells dance in excitement and wonder. They always will, as every moment is new and unexpected. This is what allured me to this place where 'God-ding and Cosmic Christ consciousness' is being articulated, lived and studied.





I made a fully conscious choice.

In the blink of an eye, I rearranged financial commitments and took leave from work. I knew without a doubt that I was coming here and it would all work out. The cosmos colluded in kindness and affirmation with this choice and here I am. That's the stuff of miracles.

And not for one moment have I doubted the integrity of this choice, something I have named as 'my coming home.

My story of being here is being captured in form by my knitting.

I was attracted into a fabric shop in Burlington, went straight to the wool stand, chose what I wanted, got the needles, purchased the lot and brought them home to the Monastery. An evolutionary impulse in action! My creative instinct prevailed. Having no idea what I'd make, I cast on one hundred stitches and began to knit. What unfolded is a simple story shawl of my time here in this community of people, creatures and place. The wool is homespun and dyed from its creator's own goats and sheep. It reflects the colours and changing seasons of the landscape of Vermont. As the shawl grew it captured these subtleties. When I began knitting it was autumn - hues of green, gold, amber, red were in the wool and then as autumn faded so did the colours.

I now have a warming memory of my time of being and becoming at Green Mountain Monastery captured in the homespun shawl. It's presence reminds me that I, Mary and yet beyond Mary am so very lucky to have been born into this time. I am educated, have relative comfort and wealth, am well fed, have choices and capacities that my own mother could not possibly imagine, and I am alive with a sense of being an active participant in the community of life. A part of the cosmos that is becoming more and more consciously aware of itself, at a time when our choices now are clearly shaping the future of the living dynamics of this planet. This is happening in me, through me and as me - a deeply integral and creative moral imperative.

I hope I can graciously wear my shawl and entertain its embodied memory in my life. When I sit again under the desert stars wrapped in its warmth I will remember with gratitude this relationship between my ancient land of Australia and this shy gentle place I experienced in Vermont. Both sing out their own stories in glory. I have a sense of gratitude to the land of Green Mountain Monastery, to Gail, Bernadette and Amie, Tashi and Bodhi, the people I crossed paths with, and to the warm abiding kindness I felt in The Hermitage.

(1) Meet Me Tonight, Silver Hook Tango, 2003 [www.kavisha.com](http://www.kavisha.com)



## From Jakarta, Indonesia to Green Mountain Monastery - by Amie Hendani

I met Sisters Gail and Bernadette through the congregation of the Good Shepherd when they gave a retreat to an international gathering of Good Shepherd sisters in Quito, Ecuador. I was in a discernment process at the time and through the mystery of God's grace, following the still, small voice within me and a generous invitation from Sisters Gail and Bernadette, left my country of Indonesia and arrived at Green Mountain Monastery on May 16, 2011.

It is impossible to put into words all that has happened during these past six months. I have helped build a greenhouse, tend the monastery's organic gardens, welcomed many guests and visitors, cleared trails, opened fields and cared for Bodhi and Tashi, the monastery's playful dogs! I have also been working on translating Thomas Berry's book, *The Christian Future and the Fate of Earth* into Bahasa Indonesia.

In addition, I have entered into the beautiful prayer life of the sisters, received their loving hospitality, engaged in theological discussions, come to love their mentor, the late Fr Thomas Berry and have begun to know my place in an unfolding universe, a single sacred community of life.

Currently we are discerning God's call to possibly bring the spirit and mission of Green Mountain Monastery to Indonesia by creating a sister community in my country. Sr. Gail will travel to Asia from February to April where we will give retreats together in India, Indonesia and the Philippines on the theme of "Moments of Grace", exploring this new cosmological moment and the need for us as a global community to come together to create new pathways of consciousness and so that we can go forward into a new future with Earth and all its beings.

I will return to Green Mountain Monastery next May to continue my journey with the sisters and to wake up the little seeds and seedlings that slept quietly through the long winter in the USA.





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Thank You! Sisters Gail and Bernadette