SPRING’S PROMISE
By Mary Southard, CSJ

Editor’s Note: Mary Southard will be one of the leaders of the April 29-30, 2016, event on “Living the Creative Life: Art, Beauty, Ecology.” She will give a talk on “My Creative Life as an Artist” and will lead a workshop involving drawing with pastels. Her art is inspired, beautiful, heavenly. Both originals and prints of her paintings will be available for purchase at the April event. This article provides a further introduction to her work. This is her blog post of February 3, 2016 and is reprinted with permission.

Have you noticed an innate sense of moving through a “between” time the last few days? We have just passed the midpoint of winter in our northern hemisphere calendar, and the beginning of spring in the Celtic calendar marked by Brigid’s day and Imbolc. I wonder if many of us are feeling that sense of spring’s promise?

I find myself in a very significant “between time” in my life’s journey at present, a time of upheaval, transition, change, and transformation at many levels. But the outcome is not as certain as spring. We all have such times in our lives, and often we do not choose them. They are “given.” We feel ourselves challenged, and “hang on” as we move into a great unknown. And so this image, “The Journey.”

It emerged from me years ago just as I became debilitated by a painful back problem. I had recently hoped to do art as a ministry, and had moved into my first studio. As soon as I could do so, I began to paint, since I could do nothing else. This is a large piece, and I found that I could work twenty minutes at a time, rest my back for fifteen, then paint some more. I discovered the “pain management” qualities of art . . . both inner and outer pain. A sense of well-being emerged once again (springtime!), and a sense of purpose (see below). I experienced the power and wonder of art available to all of us, both in doing art, but also in the beholding. You might want to “behold” this image deeply and see how it might connect with your own “Journey.”

I wrote once: “The amazing letters I received from others about this mysterious image touched them, led me to think it may be an archetype. It surely is for me. Emerging as it did in a time of transition it awakened me to some inner knowing which unfolds the purpose for my existence, which beckoned me forth to engage the world in all its beauty and terror. Leaving behind cultural and religious securities of the familiar human-centered worldview, I have been journeyed into a sacred universe unfolding in space and time. This large canvas, I see now, was
a kind of commitment to travel as ‘one who brings forth images’ which are given for the whole earth community with whom I journey.

Today I would also add, “In our critical, chaotic, moment of Earth’s evolution, we humans are being journeyed into a conscious awareness of our deep Oneness with each other and all creation in a Sacred Universe. We are to open our eyes now and see our true interconnectedness and our responsibility for making choices which will heal and restore our damaged Earth, so that all of us with her will bring forth a SPRINGTIME after the long industrial, destructive winter.”