

THE LIVING LEGACY OF THOMAS BERRY

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TB19 – THE LIVING LEGACY OF THOMAS BERRY EVENT

By Herman Greene

During the period May 30-June 1, 2019, CES and these six other groups

Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World,
Center for Human-Earth Restoration
Eco-Institute at Pickards Mountain
Emerging Ecology
Piedmont Bioregional Institute
Timberlake Earth Sanctuary



gathered with over 100 invited participants to remember the life of Thomas Berry and renew his work on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of his death. This was not a conference, a colloquium, or a seminar. We came together to be together and to connect with the land that gave birth to Thomas.

There was one 20-minute talk by Carolyn Toben on the first day and on the third day a three-hour session on the new biography of Thomas Berry (see review in this issue) led by Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, and Andrew Angyal. Otherwise there were intense small group conversations, solo walks in the forest, conviviality, and soul time.

We were not the only ones to celebrate this anniversary and seek renewal. We know there was an event at Green Mountain Monastery in Vermont, another at Genesis Farm in New Jersey, and one at the Gaia Foundation in London, UK. There must have been others too.



At TB19 we experienced, as a hymn says, “There’s a sweet, sweet spirit in this place.” We all felt it and sensed its power. Possibly a new spirituality, one connected with the spirituality of Earth, about which Thomas taught us, is the most important thing we have to offer in the Great Work. Teilhard de Chardin worried that humans wouldn’t rise to meet the challenges ahead because of a lack of spiritual energy. This energy must come from something greater than ourselves. We may say it comes from the universe or Earth but what we really mean is that there is some deep evolutionary spirit bringing into being all things, shaping all things, conditioning all things, and giving life to all life.

The organizers of TB19 sought to move the center of gravity of Thomas Berry’s work from academics to practitioners, to those who labored in the vineyards. We discussed how Thomas had touched us and shaped our work. We discussed the challenges and opportunities ahead. As we closed, we discussed what is emerging from this place.

This was our Pentecost. This was our coming out. Something cosmic happened.

Now it is time to form a genuine larger community of Thomas Berry's work. The networks and forms are emerging.

WE ARE GATHERED AMONG THE TREES

By Jim Conlon

Written at TB19 on June 1, 2019

We gathered among the trees
Embraced by the land where Thomas dwelled
Here among the meadows, butterflies and daisies
Is where he found his voice.

For more than forty years
He studied, read and thought about the beauty of the Earth
And the danger up ahead
A foreboding that he felt deeply
About to befall our sacred home.

A wise and friendly man he was ablaze with words and surprise
Thank you – you said when you died you were not going anywhere
But you were not correct
You are here among us now today.

HONORING THOMAS BERRY

By Bill Peck

Written at TB19 on June 1, 2019

Was there meaning
Hidden in the darkness
Before the Universe began?
Was there immense longing

To break away from black-holed
Emptiness and pain –
Massive – of death too often
By suicide and desolation

Instead, we are fed by all
The creatures. Their intense
Beauty may have seemed
Hidden, but they sing out with joy.

Shared and irrepressible like
Great waterfalls in full flood
Tumbling ecstatically
Down the rocks to feed a thirsty world

We share in the divine patience
Which waits for centuries to
Turn fins into arms that hug,
into arms that lift and heal.

And into minds that plan and pray and love,
Millions of prayers that merge into
One great prayer that the Universe
Prays and is.

ON THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THOMAS BERRY'S PASSING

By Betty Lou Chaika

Written upon Reflection on TB19

A swallow sculpts a green smile
of a nest on a beam of the barn above
all our comings and goings.



Cricket frogs shake their marble-
filled rattles louder
than our sweet words of praise.

Tiger swallowtails puddle on the
muddy edge of the lake between
willows and the tag alder, in which
a red-rumped assassin bug lurks,
slurping sustenance, as do we.



Swift swallows swoop over
the water nabbing bugs for those
yellow-mouthed babies lined up
at the edge of new life.

Elder flowers, white dinner plate doilies,
hover on the edge of becoming
black-red juiciness.

May we become elders and flowers
and medicine as our Elder
Berry has been for us.



*Text and photos (c) 2019 Betty Lou Chaika
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<http://earthsanctuaries.net/thomas-berry-earth-elder/>*

GIFTS THOMAS BERRY HAS GIVEN US

By K. Lauren de Boer

Editor's Note: This is a letter written on May 30, 2019, by K. Lauren de Boer, a poet, author, and former editor of Earthlight Magazine, to participants in the Living Legacy of Thomas Berry Event

Dear Friends,

Greetings to everyone. Although I could not be with you, this gathering has prompted me to reflect on the many gifts Thomas has given us.

One of those gifts is that of the “touchstone,” the experience of a place we return to for guidance throughout our lives. Thomas showed us that Earth is our primary touchstone, and ultimately where we will find our way. His touchstone experience was the meadow across the creek. My own touchstone was a crisp fall day spent on a deep bend of a Midwestern river out on the wide prairie in the company of giant bur oaks, herons, and migrating birds across sunlit clouds. I’m sure you could each name your own.

Thomas also gave us the gift of seeing more deeply. We have a sharper discernment of our integral role in the Earth community through his eyes. We now know that we are all subjects in a universe where deeper seeing becomes deeper communion becomes fuller being for all.

Finally, Thomas gifted us by affirming our passion for justice for the whole of the Earth community. Saint Teresa of Avila counseled us to “take up the cause that inspires you to love most deeply.” Our cause is the children, all living beings, future generations. This is the

communion of subjects, the deeper love that Thomas Berry is still calling us to. This is the legacy we must keep alive.

I look forward to moving forward together as a movement dedicated to the well-being of the Earth Community.

ENGAGED THOMAS BERRY LEGACY PROJECTS

Compiled by Elizabeth McAnally

Elizabeth McAnally of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale has compiled a 55-page list of “Engaged Thomas Berry Legacy Projects,” which is posted on the thomasberry.org website [here](#). This list is a sign of the high and continuing activity inspired by Thomas Berry’s work. Please consult it for your reference and help her to update and add to the list by emailing her [here](#).