

## Prophet, Teacher, Mystic

Judith Emery

Judith Emery is a publishing professional who lives and works in New York City. She is a friend of Thomas Berry, took a year off from work to study with him in 1975 and doesn't expect to ever stop learning from him.

In the early morning of June 6, 2009, before the New York part of Thomas Berry's Requiem journey, I sat re-reading the cards and letters he had sent me over the years and came across a card that he had sent from Assisi in 1979. It was a postcard of St. Francis of Assisi, and I found it so moving to read on this day and in this year of the 800th anniversary of the Franciscan Order. Thomas wrote:

*Here's the guy who pulled off the great deed of the centuries. He finally reconciled all the components of the universe. But it didn't quite take the first time. He's working on it however. He's still the center of that illusive thing that's sometimes called Christianity. He located a great moment. May it come again!*

I think it has come again. It has come again and Thomas's death is an archetypal moment within it. It is also a critical moment for those of us who have been blessed to know him or who are coming to know him now.

I have felt particularly blessed in our 41 years of friendship, filled with great and beautiful moments. I remember one summer evening as the sun was setting, we were sitting at the edge of a clear lake at Bear Mountain, a state park on the Hudson River. As we sat in silence and pondered the beauty around us, I couldn't help but think that I was in the middle of a Chinese poem. It was that kind of silence that informed and nurtured his work. His vision was so profound and yet his way was so unpretentious and unassuming. He loved and welcomed criticism and took everyone seriously.

Just as lovingly and generously as he led some of us, friends and students, in weekly readings through Dante's Divine Comedy in the mid '70s, he led us out of what he called the "trance" state to an appreciation of the Divine in all of creation. Prophet, teacher, mystic, he brought us to a new realization, a New Story and gave us guiding principles for participation in its present and future telling.

May we be inspired by his courage and wisdom and energized by his love to become authentic creatures of the earth community in the Ecozoic Age.