

## ***I Have Never Been the Same***

Joyce Rouse

**I**n 1999, I began a graduate degree in Earth Literacy at St. Mary-of-the-Woods college in Indiana. Prior to that time I had never heard the name of Thomas Berry. The preliminary semester of the program included my first exposure to the Universe Story, first as a reading from *The Universe is a Green Dragon*, then as a Universe Walk, then as artistic depiction by artists Marion C. Honors, CJS, and Mary Southard, CSJ. I have never been the same. Or as a friend of mine says, hearing the New Story changes everything!

Only later, as I participated in eco-spirituality events where Thomas spoke, told stories and read his poetry did I get to experience the gentle, pure and ethereal essence of his nature. And his humor.

It was my great honor and blessing to be the songstress for three events honoring his 93rd birthday by the city of Greensboro, North Carolina, in 2007, at an elementary school, a library and a place of worship. From babies to elders, we sang, danced, painted and portrayed an array of beings, all of which Thomas has taught us to appreciate more deeply.

Each of us who has read or heard Thomas, or has looked upon paintings inspired by his visions of past and future, or heard songs quoting his wisdom, or chatted with him over his favorite soup is richer and wiser and more compassionate. Because of his life and presence, Earth has a better future.

Joyce Rouse grew up on a farm near Cresco, Iowa, where the music of Earth touched her at an early age. She's been singing and writing ever since. With a Masters of Arts in Earth Literacy and extensive music and theatrical training, she has traveled the country for over ten years, spreading the concepts of Earth connection and sustainability. Her Albums include *Earth Mama*, *Magnificent Healing*, and *Under the Rainbow*. Her motto is "Helping Heal the Planet One Song at a Time."

