

Gratitude Abounds

Mary Evelyn Tucker

A journey of more than three decades with Thomas Berry has been one of the greatest gifts of my life, as it has been for countless others. What is it that we all share—those of us who admire his unflagging spirit, his self-effacing manner, his compassionate visage, his penetrating insights, and his comprehensive vision. It is a feeling of deep companionship that Thomas evokes—we are walking together somehow. Yes, the journey is long, and difficult. We may stumble or lose our way. But there is a person who shares it with us—the inadequacies and frustrations along with the guiding aspirations and creative dreams.

With Thomas another future is possible for the Earth community and he empowers us to engage in the great work of imagining that future. In a time saturated with false promises and misplaced hopes, his steady evocation of an emerging eozoic era ignites human energy in vibrant and unexpected ways.

For Thomas, in his brown corduroy coat, year after year at Riverdale Center and beyond, called us into the vast sweep of evolutionary dynamics. He lit up our imagination with a story of universe emergence from star birth and galaxy formation to life on Earth. But there was more. For Thomas wove us into the story—seeing us as bio-historical beings arising out of an immense journey of Earth and universe. He helped us to see our connections from the microcosm to the macrocosm, from the great flaring forth to the beauty of flowers and seeds, fish and birds. Thomas's enduring appreciation for the communion of subjects in this process is something that has profoundly reshaped our minds and hearts.

Thomas's inclusion of all of life in his own large embrace is what fills us with an ever greater capacity to enter into life's rhythms and demands—shaping, against all odds, the clay of a life-giving future. There is no one who has held us to such high aspirations so steadily and with such humor and grace.

It is this remarkable gift that we celebrate in Thomas. Over and over again he stuns us with his language that evokes companionship on a great journey—universe formation, Earth's unfolding, life's arising, human dreaming. He calls us to find our deep alignment with the powers that have sustained this remarkable epic.

Here now in the early 21st century, a new journey is beginning where the life story and the human story are becoming realigned. Thomas has planted the seeds to sustain this great transition and given us remarkable companions for the road ahead. For all of this gratitude, indeed, abounds.

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