



Expanding Consciousness: Berakah Program Deepens a Pilgrim Worldview

By Denise Turcotte, CSC

Pilgrims see Earth, indeed the entire universe, as imbued with the divine, full of wonder and mystery and permeated through and through with spirit.

From Tourists to Pilgrims: Recovering a Sense of the Sacred

I have a passion for nurturing “pilgrims” – people who experience the entire natural world as one breathtaking, interconnected whole, pulsing with divine energy. As an ecological educator, I dreamed of designing a program that would nourish this worldview by weaving together mystical spirituality and the stories of the universe, of Earth and of our own human species.

In 2012, working with colleagues Norman Comtois, OMI and Dorothy Landry, CAGS, this dream became reality in a multidisciplinary, experiential program: *The Mystical Perspective of Earth and Cosmic Consciousness*. Offered by **Berakah**, a spirituality center sponsored by the Sisters of Holy Cross, this program stresses the interrelatedness of the spiritual journey and the evolutionary story and seamlessly explores the foundational topics of ecology, mysticism and cosmology.

The documentary film *Journey of the Universe* situates all our explorations in the context of cosmic evolution, a process that displays immense creativity, connection, and interdependence. Morning quiet, group meditation and Four Directions body prayer set the tone for each day, all of which unfold around specific themes. With the help of team members, topics like Cataclysm, Emergence, Seamlessness, Differentiated Unity, the Sacredness



Denise Turcotte CSC, Norman Comtois OMI, and Dorothy Landry
Below: Participants greet the day with the Four Directions Prayer.





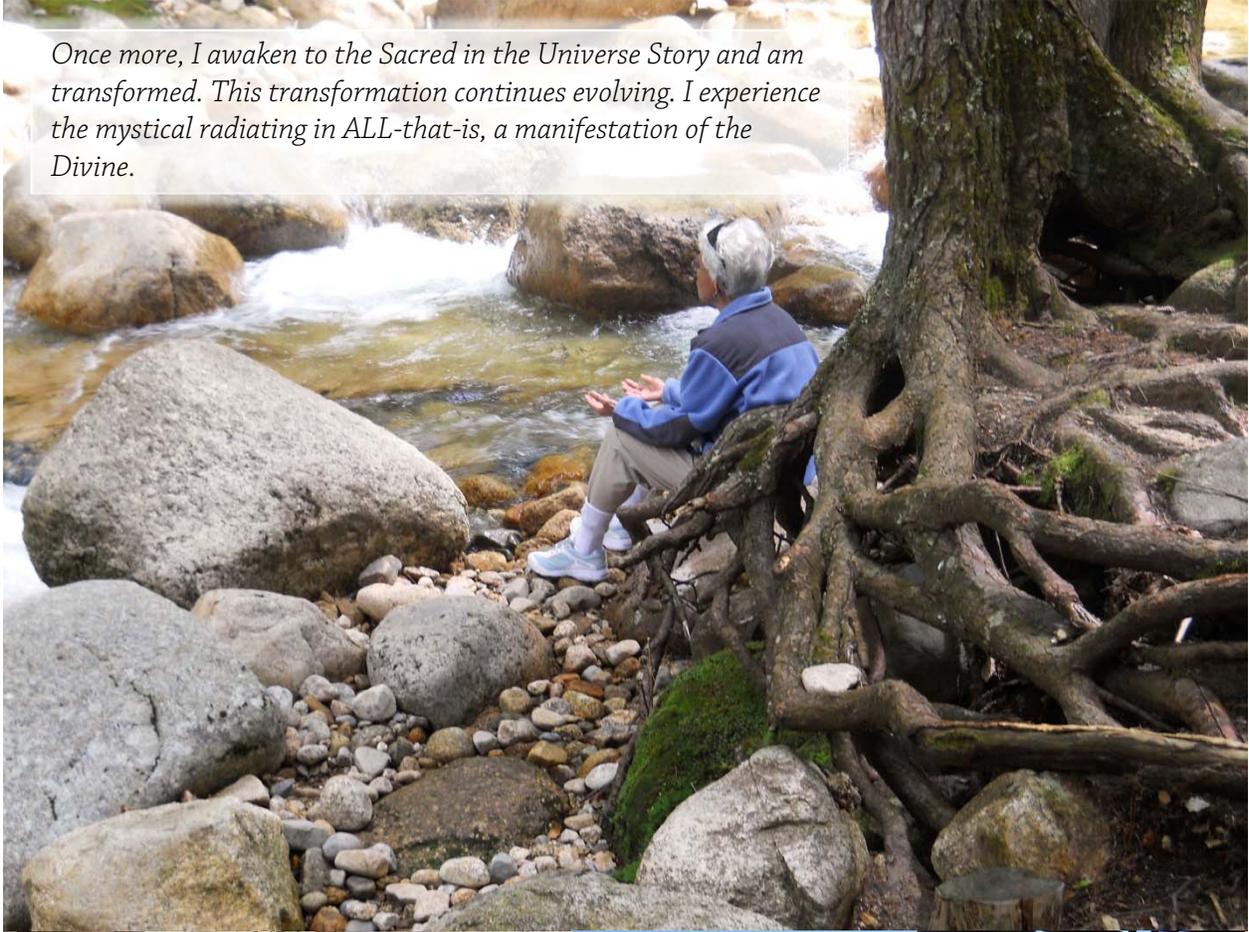
of All Creation, Awakening Consciousness, and Transformation are viewed from mystical, ecological and cosmological perspectives.

Reflective exercises also personalize and integrate the daily themes. Meditative outdoor practices such as walks along wooded trails or time spent in nearby mountains immerse participants in the beauty, energy, and strength of



nature; foster communion with the more-than-human world and expand a sense of the sacred. All together, these carefully interwoven program components can spark a profound shift in consciousness, a further step in the journey from tourist to pilgrim. As one program participant shared,

Once more, I awaken to the Sacred in the Universe Story and am transformed. This transformation continues evolving. I experience the mystical radiating in ALL-that-is, a manifestation of the Divine.



The Mystical Perspective of Earth and Cosmic Consciousness program has now been offered at **Berakah** three times. We have welcomed participants from Canada, Haiti, Australia, the Philippines, and various parts of the United States. They come from widely diverse realities, but they share passion for the mystical journey and a deep desire to walk this Earth as pilgrims. If this resonates with your aspirations, we invite you to consider joining us when we next offer this program: April 25 – May 8, 2015. For more information, please contact me at dmturcottesc@gmail.com.



Denise Turcotte, CSC, environmental educator and Coordinator of the Justice and Environment Mission Group for the Sisters of Holy Cross., is currently on the Berakah staff.

Dorothy Landry, CAGS, is a practicing minister/teacher of the Diamond Approach, a contemporary spiritual teaching that assists students to realize and actualize their essential mystical nature in everyday life.

Norman Comtois, OMI, a member of the Oblate Ecological Initiative, teaches the Universe Story as the context for exploring one's religious and spiritual experience.



Mary Turgi, CSC – Director
Telephone: (574) 284-5500

403 Bertrand Annex, Saint Mary's
E-mail: hcjoperspectives@gmail.com

Notre Dame, IN 46556
www.holycrossjustice.org