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**January 16, 2015**

**Genesis Farm**

## What to Remember When Waking

What you can plan is too small for you to live.  
What you can live wholeheartedly will make plans enough  
for the vitality hidden in your sleep.

To be human is to become visible  
while carrying what is hidden as a gift to others.

To remember the other world in this world  
is to live in your true inheritance.

You are not a troubled guest on this earth,  
you are not an accident amidst other accidents  
you were invited from another and greater night  
than the one from which you have just emerged.

excerpted from *What to Remember When Waking* ,  
by David Whyte

Dear Friends of the Farm,

As we were preparing to transition from one calendar year into another, Genesis Farm was feeling a deep inclination to disengage from the patterns and practices of end-of-the-year traditions shaped by potent market enterprises. Such forces might be described as a commercial take-over of life itself.

Our clarity to do this began with a gathering before Thanksgiving to watch a powerful documentary, [Earth and](#)

[the American Dream](#). The film reflects on the arrival of Europeans on the North American continent, the early stages of their colonizing, and the consequences of their beliefs and motivation upon the continent itself and the original peoples who had arrived millennia earlier.

We chose this film because it sheds such light on the origin of “the American Dream,” a pervasive myth which says much about the early settlers who sensed they had arrived upon “promised land” to which they were divinely entitled. The film helped us to reflect on the origins of what has become the American holiday of Thanksgiving, and to see certain distortions in its contemporary expression.

*Earth and the American Dream* also opens perspectives on how this time of family gatherings has tended to diverge from what is an inherent human instinct: the desire to acknowledge and give thanks for what has been received as gift.

Modern rites of Thanksgiving now lead into Black Friday, Cyber Monday and the tsunami of pressures that accompany us into “getting ready”, or to “count the shopping days left till...” Indeed, one is led to believe that the success of the entire retail industry now depends on this time of the calendar year.

At heart is the commandeering of one of the most sacred, mysterious and interior periods of the year, the season where the abundance of autumn's harvest passes into winter and the long stretches of darkness in the northern hemisphere.

Clustered around the seasonal passage of the winter solstice are sacred days and periods alluding to diverse religious and cultural themes of inner liberation, of awakening, of the birthing and rebirthing of one's soul-life, and of inner searchings for a divine and providential presence. These longings to tend to the inner self are strong and deep. Yet the silence needed to nurture them is rarely found. The doors to our souls and homes seem to have been pried open by winds carrying every kind of wired image and sound from around the planet.

Yet the themes of unselfish concerns for others embedded in the meanings of Hanukkah and of Christmas persist. Prejudice, ignorance, self-interest, indifference and denial may threaten to extinguish them, but goodness, love, and compassion continue to endure, anchored to memories and stories that inspire and give hope. What also endures is an ever-evolving capacity to transform naiveté into a greater capacity for discernment.

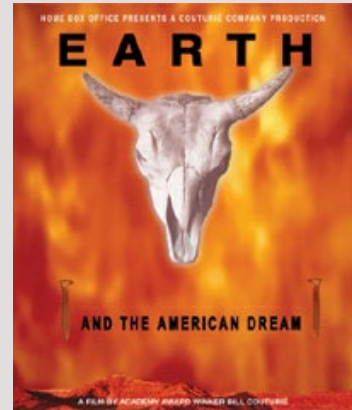
Traditionally, Genesis Farm mailed out an annual letter with our hopes and needs during this same time of year. Our letter would undoubtedly arrive at a time when all us us were deluged with appeals for financial support by deserving groups working mightily to address a lengthy catalog of ecological, political, and social disasters. Their causes are urgent and immediate, and the tax calendar puts enormous pressure on non-profits to meet their funding goals. Such goals are required in order to counteract the priorities set by institutions based in the mythic American Dream.

We sensed it was time for us to disengage from the pressure of the yearly calendar.

As we approached the winter solstice, we also entered more deeply into the elemental meaning of this phase of Earth's journey around the second-generation star we call Sun. Genesis Farm ritually opened the “portal” to this passage on December 19th. We felt guided by the silent life forms sleeping above and below the frozen soils.

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In many of his writings, cultural historian Thomas Berry suggests that the “[great work of our time](#) is to re-invent the human at the species level,” and to do so by “story and shared dream experience.” We continue to reinvent and realign our calendar with Earth's calendar. We seek to draw from what Earth is doing as she responds to



the conditions demanded by the orbital circling of Sun, by the shifts in proximity to its warmth and light, and by the axial turning through hours of light and dark.

Many of our Neolithic ancestors governed their personal and communal lives around this primal relationship of Earth to Sun. They felt the subtle influences of Moon and stars. In the Gaelic tradition, there were eight



ceremonies and rituals marking the major seasonal shifts. The rituals were known as the winter and summer solstices, the spring and autumn equinoxes, and the “cross-quarters” or midpoints between them. They marked the journey of birth, life, death, and rebirth as they observed these patterns in the entire outer world of nature. Gradually, a sense of the sacred was forming in the human mind and imagination. Marking these seasonal changes in ritual and ceremony became a way to bring one’s life, family and community into harmony with them.

Today, it is a challenge to be attentive to this alignment when our calendar is uprooted and split from the basic calendar of what is happening in the cosmos. It is equally difficult to genuinely honor the central meanings of our sacred human, religious traditions. At their core they speak of the ineffable mysteries of a divine providence at the heart of existence. This providence is eternal, faithful, and ever incarnated and renewed. But it asks much of us in return. The poet David Whyte suggests that:

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Surely our true inheritance was not meant to be spent on toxic, perpetually militarized, and intolerable human institutions that threaten all of life on this precious planet.

Perhaps the forgotten memory of our connection with the entire web of life can be recovered if our longing for it is strong enough and if it is faithfully expressed in persistent prayer and ritual. As we all awaken to live wholeheartedly that vitality hidden in our dreams, we can begin to reclaim the forgotten aspects of the original calendar patterned on the cosmos.

### **Portals and Passages**

Genesis Farm is continuing to [explore and create rituals](#) that are inclusive of our religious traditions but help us to see our lives within the rhythms of the eight passages of this ancient deep-time calendar. Last year we renovated the art studio to house the resources and materials for this ongoing work.

We invite you to celebrate these seasonal passages with us. If you live in our area you are welcome to come and celebrate the opening and/or closing of the “portals” to the passages. The portals are meant to be a symbolic opening of the sacred time and space surrounding the actual passing of Earth in her seasonal journey. But we also encourage you to perform rituals in the places and regions where you live. Every place, every front and backyard, every neighborhood patch of life, every park, every tree and bush is where Earth teaches us how to live in place and in season. We will share our modest efforts to create rituals, which include and draw from all religious traditions as well as from the presence and support of the land, the skies, and the greater communities of life which sustain us.



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In addition to the ongoing development of these rituals, Genesis Farm has been evolving the website so

painstakingly created by former staff member Seanna Ashburn in 2008. It gave us an expanded outreach and presence in the world. We have been building on her foundational work and hope to unveil a revised website at the time of the spring equinox.

At the same time we hope to complete a self-guided pathway into the expanded groves, gardens, orchards, reflection stations, and ritual spaces of the Valley of Aluna. Because the pathway leads into different dimensions of literal, symbolic, and mythic meanings, it is being designed as a form of pilgrimage and will offer insights and learning, demonstrations, and resources covering many aspects of a new cosmology, bioregionalism, housing, food, energy, seed saving, biodynamic approaches to gardening, and spiritual seasonal celebrations.

Your generous and faithful support of Genesis Farm is appreciated more than we can say. You, our growing circle of new and long-time friends has accompanied us from near and far over these past thirty-five years. Together, we share a common future and a commitment to do our part to open its possibilities to hope. We are grateful.

### Remembering a great man

The day after we opened the portal to the quiet passage of the winter solstice, Genesis Farm lost a dear friend from this circle as Jerry Brunetti slipped away into another and a greater night. He was a most insightful, generous and courageous voice for farmers and all those who were committed to defending and restoring the healing powers of soils and water.



On December 20th, in a hospice center in Bethlehem, PA, Jerry died peacefully after an almost super-human effort to bring transparency to the ways of both industrial farming and medicine and how we have been drawn into the folly of those two profit-driven forces. Both of them promote the common belief that humans can wage war against nature and somehow miraculously survive.

When Jerry was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 1999, he was warned that only by going to war against his "invasive cancer cells" could he survive. He chose another way. He drew from his own enormous understanding of the sources of health in nature. It was out of this intuitive and scientific understanding that he had been prescribing treatments for sick soils, sick farms, and sick farm animals.

Jerry designed the protocols for his own return to health. For another fifteen years he gave unstintingly of his energy through lecturing, traveling, teaching, writing and personally advising countless farmers all over the world.

When both Jerry and his health-care professionals missed the links between lymphoma and lyme's disease, the return of his cancer silently grew undetected. It erupted over the last year.

Even as he struggled unsuccessfully to regain his body's health and strength, Jerry finished his extraordinary book, [The Farm as Ecosystem](#). It was published by Acres USA in 2014. It is now his precious legacy, a map for farmers who wish to recover their way back to Earth as the primary source of transforming sunlight into food. Modern industrialized agriculture is based on a model of nature inconsistent with what Jerry so clearly describes as the miracle and mystery of life, of soils, water, sunlight, and the vast memory of biological, geological, and cosmological time. His title could well have been *The Farm as Deep Time Memory*. Here are the last words he wrote in the last paragraph of *The Farm as Ecosystem*:

*As E.O. Wilson, author of The Diversity of life, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of two textbooks, and honorary curator of entomology at Harvard University states, "I will argue that every scrap of biological diversity is priceless, to be learned and cherished, and never to be surrendered without a struggle." Father Thomas Berry, a Passionist priest and author of The Universe Story, The Dream of the Earth, and The Great Work, sums it up succinctly. "The Universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects."*

In most traditional religions, the great seasonal journey is the archetype for all attempts to describe and enter meaningfully into the realities of life, death and resurrection or rebirth. Jerry, whose ancestors were shaped by the beauty and fertility of the waters and lands of Italy, carried a deep love of his heritage. His soul was shaped by the Italian landscape, a strong Mediterranean zest for life, a long spiritual lineage, and a slightly elevated love of talking and converting you to his way of seeing.

Last week I was driving across the farming region where he lived. I felt his absence from that landscape as vivid, palpable, and very sad. Then I thought of an amazing story that had just broken in the news. Pope Francis was opening the Vatican Farm to the world. I couldn't help but wonder what Jerry might have had to do with that...

Blessings and Peace,

Miriam MacGillis, OP

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