

THE WELLSRING COMMUNITY INC

PILGRIMAGE 2003



ANOTHER STEP ALONG THE WAY

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ANOTHER STEP ALONG THE WAY

THE PILGRIMAGE

Thanks for the comments on *Commencing the Pilgrimage*. The Wellspring Community is very encouraging and very affirming.

Several people have also responded to my challenge for self-disclosure, vulnerability, and building community. I have incorporated some of this feedback in the segments included in this mailing.

Some people have offered to contribute to later instalments.

I am hoping to work to the original schedule

Instalment 2:	February/March	Finding spiritual meaning in the desert and other places
Instalment 3:	March/April	Finding spiritual meaning in nature and animals
Instalment 4:	April/May	Finding spiritual meaning in relationships
Instalment 5:	May/June	Finding spiritual meaning in the stranger or the other
Instalment 6:	June/July	Great pilgrims and great pilgrimages.



But as I said before, this is a work in progress and who knows where the Spirit will lead!

Eugene Stockton has made a major contribution to this instalment. He has written a marvellous book called *Landmarks: A Spiritual Search in a Southern Land*. He has very generously offered a copy to each member of the pilgrimage. The book is enclosed. He has also contributed a copy of a wonderful article by Peter Malone called *The Heart of Australia*. These contributions form the heart of this instalment. I have used two chapters from Eugene's book in this instalment and I will use other chapters in later instalments.

Please continue to send material that you think might be useful. Remember that this is a cooperative effort. It is not too late to offer to prepare an instalment!

I would be thrilled to get some responses by 3 March.

Salem-al-salakim--Peace

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Day 1: The Heart Of Australia

Peter Malone, M.S.C., *The Heart Of Australia*, *Compass Theological Review*, 4, 23, 1988

The earliest white settlers in Australia, forced or free, called it, in dismay, a 'God-forsaken' land. Explorers moving north and west found no inland sea but barrenness. Pioneers and squatters searched for pasture land and, even when successful, suffered the natural disasters of flood, drought, fire to which the land was prone. The newcomers battled the land.

Yet, for thousands of years, peoples had been at home in this land. Cultivating a harmony with its seasons and moods, alert to its rich life and developing a simple complexity of law and lore, the aborigines appreciated the land, belonged to it. The land was not God-forsaken. It was filled with creative validity that mythic imagination and dreaming brought to life in story, legend and ritual. Aboriginal spirituality is the heartbeat of Australia. (Hope Neill.)

In 200 years, comers to this land have not been attuned to the religious experience of the aboriginal peoples, the deeper spirituality they can live by. They have not thought to listen to these voices and learn. Despising, or even good-naturedly patronising, they misunderstood culture that might not have produced permanent buildings or a literature but which has the key elements of a civilisation.

The religious experience of those who have arrived here since 1788 is often, as Tony Kelly has written, a response of the 'inarticulate heart'. We do not speak or write so well of our religious experience. We are frequently self-conscious or embarrassed or plainly unable to express what is in our hearts: tongue-tied, emotion-tied, gesture-tied, inarticulate. Yet, we are a people with a heritage of isolation, of hurt, of political and cultural cringe, of cruelty, of heroism, of battling, of egalitarian and romantic sentiment, of pride. There are deep longings in the hearts of all Australians: for a haven, a home, for freedom, for prosperity, for peace, for a new identity which does not sever bonds with the old. The longings are in the hearts of the indigenous, the migrant, the Australian-born.

Australia is blessed with a symbolic heart, the great red monolith in the centre, Uluru. It stands in a motionless, timeless landscape, imaging eternity. Perhaps thrust across the plains by a genesis cataclysm, it stands with majestic strength, a centering place for all to come to. Aborigines traditionally journeyed to this rock refuge and sanctuary in times past. Now it belongs to them again. But now, too, pilgrims (be they reverent travellers or rushing tourists) from all over Australia are able to travel to the Rock.

Uluru is the articulate heart of Australia. It speaks to all of us. Its sure and solid foundation makes it a rock of refuge, a sacred place of worship, of struggle between good and evil and a resort for the hot, the weary, the thirsty. Guides tell the visitor that aboriginal groups could see the Rock from far away and, especially in times of drought, journeyed towards its shade, its beautiful sheltering clefts, drank from the pools. But they then moved on; others might want to come to be refreshed in this place. There is life around the Rock. The desert is arid but not barren. Bird-life, animals, desert trees and shrubs and, after rain, grasses and flowers. And nearby are the more feminine curves, valleys and the beauty of Kata Juta, the Olgas.

Uluru invites Australians to centre themselves, to reflect, to be aware of a presence in our land which transcends ourselves, which is godly. In the desert, the longings of the Australian heart can surface, be expressed and find some hope and reassurance. As aborigines did in the past, back we go to our own places, back to the coast and the hinterland. Can we ponder all these things in our hearts? We must not be amongst those who have the experience but miss the meaning.

Suggestions

1. Read Psalm 63. Imagine that you are part of the group referred to in the second last paragraph above. You can see Uluru from a distance. Imagine the heat, the pools, the spiritual significance. Try to sense the significance. Read Psalm 63 again. Can you invest the scene with your own spiritual meaning?
2. Hardship, suffering, and rejection can sharpen our thirst for God. Read Psalm 63 again. His family drove David into the wilderness. What is driving you to the desert?
3. How often do we hear Australians expressing a thirst for God? What about you? Read Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman in John 4: 1-14.
4. John Connor is a member of the Wellspring Community who is assisting with these materials. He has been accepted to serve as a volunteer on Iona beginning on the 18th March. This is his pilgrimage. Unfortunately, he won't be able to join us in person for the Wellspring Pilgrimage. John reflects on Instalment 1:

I especially appreciated the prayer guide or sequence - Pause, Presence, Picture, Ponder, Promise, Pray -adapted from David Adam, "The Cry of the Deer". I found it a very helpful way of drawing into silence and into that space where I am able to feel God's Presence and be aware of God's love and rest in His presence. Although I am not primarily a visual person I found myself able to picture very clearly Iona where I hope to serve as a volunteer for six weeks in April - May. I also appreciated the challenge to remember God's presence throughout the day.

Does this approach help you?

Day 2: Wide Open Spaces

Eugene Stockton, *Landmarks*, Chapter 3: Wide Open Spaces (*Eastwood: Parish Ministry Publications, 1990*).

In the Introduction to this book, Eugene challenges us to a quest for “an Australian Jesus.” We are on a quest for Jesus in our land. Eugene dares us to find God revealed in our own physical environment: the very spiritual riches of this vast land hold spiritual riches for the discerning (p1-2). Like the Promised Land, the desert of Central Australia is harsh, dry, unpromising and uncompromising, yet it can be a place of revelation.

In Chapter 3 Wide Open Spaces, Eugene explores freedom and liberation. Before we go further in our pilgrimage, before we arrive in the Centre, let us consider the liberation that Jesus offers us.

Consider the oppression of many who live in the Centre. Consider our indigenous brothers and sisters. Consider others who live there bound up in other forms of oppression and unfreedom.

Psalms for a Pilgrim People by Jim Cotter, Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg PA, 1998, p.257

The blurb to Jim Cotter’s book says that he has made the Psalms prayable for Christians today. He considers today’s realities by including references to issues that concern us now, while retaining the poetry and beauty of the original Psalms. Certainly, the theme of pilgrim is evident. In particular he calls Psalms 120 to 134 the Pilgrim Psalms.

Psalm 122: The Pilgrim Psalms: III

PEACE AND PERPLEXITY

What will become of the city?

Refrain: Lift up your eyes and see: the City of all our dreams.

I was glad when my companions of faith
ventured with me to the house of our God.
Weary and tired, yet our feet will stand
within the gates of the City of Peace,
Jerusalem the goal of our longing,
where the pilgrims gather in unity.
Drawn ever closer to the city,
to the place of prayer and of presence,
to faith renewed and hope restored,
to the healing and peace of the Promise,
we your people climb to the gates,
to the seat of your judgment and mercy.
We pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
May those who love you prosper.
Peace be within your walls,
prosperity in all your households.
For the sake of my kindred and friends,
I will pray from my heart for your peace.
For the sake of the house of our God,
I will do all that I can for your good.

Bless the people of Jerusalem, all 'who look to Abraham as their ancestor in faith. Take the energy of our prayers and deeds and transform both place and people into a city of pilgrimage and peace for the

whole world. Bring all of us there, so that we may taste and see your generous and gracious love.
(p.280)

SUGGESTIONS

1. Dot Cant, a Friend of the Wellspring Community reflects on Instalment 1:
A word about the Hesychasm pilgrimage: I had some fun (useful, I'm sure) working out what my own "prayer of the heart" would be. Decided it had to be in the first person plural, not singular, and also had to be 'shot through with thanksgiving' (cf Phil 4). I came up with
My Father, thankyou for your enfolding arms of love.
Bless us all with your grace.
I reckon I could pray that without ceasing (hopefully).
As you consider the "heart of Australia", what criteria would your "prayer of the heart" have? What shape would your prayer have? (See end of Day 7 for some prayer suggestions.)
2. Can you adapt Jim Cotter's version of Psalm 122 to become our prayer as we seek God in the Centre?
3. Reflect on Eugene's "Freeing Process" (p.22). In what ways does it speak to you, especially as you engage in this pilgrimage?
4. Eugene draws heavily on Scripture. Choose one of the passages he quotes and meditate on it.

Day 3: Desert

Eugene Stockton, *Landmarks*, Chapter 5: Desert (*Eastwood: Parish Ministry Publications, 1990*).

Eugene urges us to consider our heritage, to own it proudly, and then let it go as we find our way in a broad dry land akin to the land that cradled our religion.

Psalms for a Pilgrim People by Jim Cotter, Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg PA, 1998, p.257

Psalm 119: The Living Way: III

LONGING FOR GOD'S JUSTICE

[As travellers into God we need guideposts which can be discerned from within the words of the Gospels. For example, we are blessed when we hunger and thirst for the right relationships longed for by a just God. Only by being faithful to such wisdom will our lives be built on rock.]

The journey Guideposts
The invitation Be faithful to what I have said
The implication Build on rock

Deal bountifully with your servant,
that I may live, and keep your Word.
Open my eyes that I may see
the wondrous things of your Law.
I am a traveller upon earth:
hide not your Guideposts from me.
I am consumed with a very fervent desire,
a longing that I have for your Justice.
You have rebuked the pride that lurks in me,
you rescue me when I am lost and astray.
Take away from me the spirit of scorn, hold me fast to the rock of your Truth.
Keep me from suspicion and hatred:
rather may I meditate on your Counsel.
For your Sayings are my delight,
and they are my counsellors.

SUGGESTIONS

1. John Connor reflects on Day 5 of Instalment 1: Pilgrimage: Seeking the place of One's Resurrection

I was able to enter into an imaginative recreation of Jesus walking on the water and, with him, Peter, in the midst of a fierce wind - following the lectio divina approach with a narrative passage. I became Peter in the account as I recognised how I can become very anxious in a demanding or stressful situation. Like Peter I can readily take fright 'and begin to sink'. As I entered into the story, I really felt the strength of Jesus' hand and arm held out to hold me. it is my prayer that I will be able to come back to this experience in future times of stress (perhaps in the pilgrimage journey) and know our Lord's steadying hand.

You may like to try the *lectio divina* approach (see Day 25 of the 2003 Wellspring Community Prayer Diary for further information) as you reflect on some of the passage Eugene explores in this chapter..

2. Try some of Eugene's "Celebration: suggestions (p.42)
3. Consider the "rock" symbol. What "rock" passages in Scripture connect most with you?

Day 4: A Spiritual Geography

Kathleen Norris, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, (Houghton Mifflin: New York, 1993).

THE BEAUTIFUL PLACES

THE HIGH PLAINS, the beginning of the desert West, often act as a crucible for those who inhabit them. Like Jacob's angel, the region requires that you wrestle with it before it bestows a blessing. This can mean driving through a snowstorm on icy roads, wondering whether you'll have to pull over and spend the night in your car, only to emerge under tag ends of clouds into a clear sky blazing with stars. Suddenly you know what you're seeing: the earth has turned to face the center of the galaxy, and many more stars are visible than the ones we usually see on our wing of the spiral.

Or a vivid double rainbow marches to the east, following the wild summer storm that nearly blew you off the road. The storm sky is gunmetal gray, but to the west the sky is peach streaked with crimson. The land and sky of the West often fill what Thoreau termed our "need to witness our limits transgressed." Nature, in Dakota, can indeed be an experience of the holy.

More Americans than ever, well over 70 percent, now live in urban areas and tend to see Plains land as empty. What they really mean is devoid of human presence. Most visitors to Dakota travel on interstate highways that will take them as quickly as possible through the region, past our larger cities to such attractions as the Badlands and the Black Hills. Looking at the expanse of land in between, they may wonder why a person would choose to live in such a barren place, let alone love it. But mostly they are bored: they turn up the car stereo, count the miles to civilization, and look away.

Dakota is a painful reminder of human limits, just as cities and shopping malls are attempts to deny them. This book is an invitation to a land of little rain and few trees, dry summer winds and harsh winters, a land rich in grass and sky and surprises. On a crowded planet, this is a place inhabited by few, and by the circumstance of inheritance, I am one of them. Nearly twenty years ago I returned to the holy ground of my childhood summers; I moved from New York City to the house my mother had grown up in, in an isolated town on the border between North and South Dakota.

More than any other place I lived as a child or young adult - Virginia, Illinois, Hawaii, Vermont, New York - this is my spiritual geography, the place where I've wrestled my story out of the circumstances of landscape and inheritance. The word "geography" derives from the Greek words for earth and writing, and writing about Dakota has been my means of understanding that inheritance and reclaiming what is holy in it. Of course Dakota has always been such a matrix for its Native American inhabitants. But their tradition is not mine, and in returning to the Great Plains, where two generations of my family lived before me, I had to build on my own traditions, those of the Christian West.

When a friend referred to the western Dakotas as the Cappadocia of North America, I was handed an essential connection between the spirituality of the landscape I inhabit and that of the fourth-century monastics who set up shop in Cappadocia and the deserts of Egypt. Like those monks, I made a counter-cultural choice to live in what the rest of the world considers a barren waste. Like them, I had to stay in this place, like a scarecrow in a field, and hope for the rains to see its beauty. My idea of what makes a place beautiful had to change, and it has. The city no longer appeals to me for the cultural experiences and possessions I might acquire there, but because its population is less homogenous than Plains society. Its holiness is to be found in being open to humanity in all its diversity. And the western Plains now seem bountiful in their emptiness, offering solitude and room to grow.

Taken from pages 1 – 3.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Think about those times when you have had “an experience of the holy”. How did God break in on you? What was the context? Allow God to guide your imagination now as you dream about ways God might break in on you again as you take part in the pilgrimage.
2. What is your spiritual geography? What are your means of understanding your inheritance? How do you reclaim what is holy in your inheritance?
3. Dot Cant continues her reflections:

I wonder if maybe going on a pilgrimage will mirror, to some extent, what was my daughter's experience some years ago. She put on a backpack and headed off overseas to "find herself". With the benefit of hindsight she said "I went overseas to 'find myself'; but I wasn't there! I had to come back home to 'find myself', among people and places I already knew".

I wonder if, when people go on pilgrimage in search of intimacy with God, they may find that true intimacy with God is to be found at home, among the 'friend or stranger' in whom God keeps coming to us.

Having said that, I must tell you that when my late husband and I went on a minor pilgrimage to Iona twenty-odd years ago, it marked a turning point in our lives, for which we were always truly thankful.

What do you think?

Day 4: A Spiritual Geography

Kathleen Norris, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, (Houghton Mifflin: New York, 1993).

The prairie descendants of the ancient desert monastics, the monks and nuns of Benedictine communities in the Dakotas . . . inspire me to hope. One of the vows a Benedictine makes is *stability*: commitment to a particular community, a particular place. If this vow is counterculture by contemporary American standards, it is countercultural in the way that life on the Plains often calls us to be. Benedictines represent continuity in the boom-and-bust cycles of the Plains; they incarnate, and can articulate, the reasons people want to stay.

Terrence Kardong, a monk at an abbey in Dakota founded roughly a thousand years after their European motherhouse, has termed the Great Plains "a school for humility," humility being one goal of Benedictine life. He writes, "in this eccentric environment...certainly one is made aware that things are not entirely in control." In fact, he says, the Plains offer constant reminders that "we are quite powerless over circumstance." His abbey, like many Great Plains communities with an agricultural base, had a direct experience of powerlessness, going bankrupt in the 1920s. Then, and at several other times in the community's history, the monks were urged to move to a more urban environment.

Kardong writes, "We may be crazy, but we are not necessarily stupid. We built these buildings ourselves. We've cultivated these fields since the turn of the century. We watched from our dining room window the mirage of the Killdeer Mountains rise and fall on the horizon. We collected a library full of local history books and they belong here, not in Princeton. Fifty of our brothers lie down the hill in our cemetery. We have become as indigenous as the cottonwood trees. ..If you take us somewhere else, we lose our character, our history - maybe our soul."

A monk does not speak lightly of the soul, and Kardong finds in the Plains the stimulus to develop an inner geography. "A monk isn't supposed to need all kinds of flashy surroundings. We're supposed to have a beautiful inner landscape. Watching a storm pass from horizon to horizon fills your soul with reverence. It makes your soul expand to fill the sky."

. . . .

St. Hilary, a fourth-century bishop (and patron saint against snake bites) once wrote, "Everything that seems empty is full of the angels of God." The magnificent sky above the Plains sometimes seems to sing this truth; angels seem possible in the wind-filled expanse. A few years ago a small boy named Andy who had recently moved to the Plains from Pennsylvania told me he knew an angel named Andy Le Beau. He spelled out the name for me and I asked him if the angel had visited him here. "Don't you know?" he said in the incredulous tone children adopt when adults seem stupefyingly ignorant. "Don't you know?" he said, his voice rising, "*This* is where angels drown."

Andy no more knew that he was on a prehistoric sea bed than he knew what *le beau* means in French, but some ancient wisdom in him had sensed great danger here; a terrifying but beautiful landscape in which we are at the mercy of the unexpected, and even angels proceed at their own risk.

(Taken from pages 8 to 12)

Suggestions:

1. List the ways that your life is countercultural. Does the Wellspring Community challenge you to be countercultural?
2. Consider the following description of a monastery of contemplative Benedictine women in the US. They are an enclosed community. The Wellspring Community is a dispersed community. Are any of the principles of the Benedictine community relevant to you or to the Wellspring Community?

In order to give ourselves as fully as possible to the mission to pray without ceasing, we live and work within the enclosure of the monastery. The enclosure, marked by physical walls and grille work in certain locations, functions like the permeable membrane of a cell wall that allows

life to flow in and out. The stable but essentially dynamic character of our monastic life is determined by the constantly interpenetrating rhythms of prayer, work, and study.

We seek to extend participation in this dynamism to guests whenever possible through various forms of hospitality, in accordance with St. Benedict's admonition to receive each guest as Christ. The Benedictine motto is ora et labora: prayer and work. Our work is twofold, including both lectio divina, which means sacred reading or study, and manual work. In the monastic tradition the texts of Scripture, the writings of the Church Fathers, and other inspired texts are regarded as fertile fields to be cultivated with the whole of one's being. The word of God, when taken in and pondered in the memory of the heart, helps us to read all our daily experiences, great and small, in the perspective of faith.

As we develop a contemporary understanding of the dignity of all human labor and the Gospel mandate to be wise stewards of creation, we strive to support new and diverse expressions of that stewardship. We believe contemplative life must build on natural aptitudes and prior professional experience. As she moves through the stages of formation within the enclosure, each woman is challenged and helped to find new forms of the particular service God has called her to, whether that be through land and animal management, scholarship, art, law, social services, the performing arts, medicine or any other area of human endeavor.

Each nun takes the uniquely Benedictine vows of Stability, Conversion of Life and Obedience: Stability, binding her perpetually to this particular monastic community; Conversion of Life, obliging her to choose every day to re-center herself in God through the community; and Obedience, by which she pledges fidelity to the authority of the Abbess and all those delegated to take responsibility within the "school of the Lord's service."

Day 5: Landscape as Spiritual Laboratory

David Tacey, *Edge of the Sacred: Transformation in Australia* (Harper Collins: Blackburn, 1995)

At the age of fifteen I left Sunday school and the Church, and joined the Alice Springs Gem and Mineral Club, which met every second Sunday afternoon. After a couple of years I had boxes of low-grade minerals and chipped gemstones under my bed and at the bottom of the wardrobe. On rocky quartz plains east and west of Alice, we would all be head-down, small pick-axes in hands, looking for crystal formations, for colourful clusters of rock, for zircons, amethysts and garnets. Sometimes I would find iron pyrites and think I had found gold. Especially west of Alice, when I confronted with a glittering field of quartz and mica, I would sometimes imagine that I had discovered Lasseter's fabulous reef. Years later, reading Jung, I found that gold was the symbol of the soul and of the alchemist's spiritual quest. Years later as well, because our family did not talk about our ancestry, I found I was descended on both my mother's and my father's side from goldseekers and diggers, from poor folk from Ireland, England, and the Isle of Man, who came out to the Victorian goldfields in the late nineteenth century in search of their fortune. They did not find any gold, but they stayed on, and moved south to Melbourne.

So I shared with them both the desire for gold and the failure to find any; but I suspect that we were all engaged in a less tangible search, a search for alchemical or spiritual gold, and that our gold-digging and searching was in part a literal enactment of the quest for philosophical gold. We were searching for the soul, and it is interesting that the link across four generations of Australians was that our soulmaking was conducted in direct relationship with the land. Whether at Bendigo, Maldon, Ballarat, or Alice Springs, we were all head-down reverent worshippers of the rocky earth, not finding the precious metal, but nevertheless becoming deeply acquainted and at one with the rocks, stones, and mythic openings of this ancient continent. We were all students of the spirit of place, rock-philosophers, or what D. W. Harding might call geopsychologists.

I reject the fashionable and trendy idea that the first white Australians were merely malicious and uncouth invaders of this land, driven by an empty gold-lust. It is part of our habitual national self-flagellation that we have allowed ourselves to believe and perpetuate this entirely negative image. The time has come, I feel, to strip away our guilt and our self-loathing and to examine the past, not only for its criminal atrocities and its political errors, but also for its mythic and archetypal resonances. There are so many amazing resonances in our Euro-Australian heritage, our journey across vast seas in order to arrive at a topsy-turvy world in search of gold or paradise, that we hardly need to create literary fictions or fabrications to express the Australian soul. As Mark Twain famously remarked, rich and fabulous fantasies are already embedded in our actual history and geography, and all we have to do is to extract and refine them, to care for them with the same care extended to gemstones embedded in matrices of rock. We have to stop the self-loathing long enough to attend to the flecks of gold, the soul-sparks or *silex scintillans* in our lived experience.

A Sydney colleague once said that whereas the old European alchemists made gold in their dark, vaporous laboratories and secret fabricated chambers, we in Australia make gold, or discover symbolical gold, by direct encounter with the landscape. Our spiritual way here cannot be, as was said by Hermes Trismegistus and other real or legendary Europeans, an *opus contra naturam*, a work against nature. There is too much nature in Australia, too much rock, too much *prima materia* or untransformed matter. If we heroically pitted ourselves against nature here in a bid to transform nature into spirit, we would go mad, break down, or be consumed by nature. The entire heroic fantasy about subduing nature, conquering Gaia or controlling Mother Earth is a European fantasy, which can never work in Australia. This country demands a different archetypal style, a style that works with nature rather than against it. The very notion that spirit is opposed to matter cannot take root here. Our spiritual mode will have to be ecological, a work *with* nature, an *opus cum natura*.

In this important aspect we must take our cue from the Aboriginal people and not from Western Europe. Herein lies what must be regional, local, or particular about an Australian spirituality; we cannot simply import Judeo-Christianity into this country and think that this will suffice. It won't work, because it is based solidly on masculinist and dualistic notions of spirit and matter that can make

little sense here. The Australian Way will have to be ecological, like the Aboriginal people themselves. The new spirituality that arises from Australian experience will, I believe, be precisely the kind of spirituality that will set a timely example to the rest of the world. It will be nonheroic and will not go the way of the now exhausted heroism of Western Europe or North America. It will not be patriarchal, because the Earth Mother is far too strong here. Any glance at Australian literature or culture indicates that, despite the fact that Australian social and political institutions are patriarchal, the underlying emotional and psychological structures are governed by the mother. The great Australian writers from Henry Lawson through to Patrick White are all sons of the mother, in both the personal sense of being mother-dominated as children, and in the archetypal or mythic sense of being 'loved sons' of the chthonic earth as mature artists.

My own experience in Alice Springs taught me to love and respect the Earth Mother in ways that I could not have achieved while living in Melbourne. It was the Earth Mother and her stony landscape that broke the encasement of my rational ego and drew me into a larger sense of identity, that opened up a dialogue between myself and the archetypal other. Naturally the vast expanses and the sheer weight of all this rock terrified me at times, and one can easily feel crushed by it. But Australian landscape is like the unconscious itself: if you respect it and realise the ego can never hope to assimilate, conquer, or transform it, you are allowed to survive. That is and must be our way, a humble aboriginal way, a shamanic way; Les Murray has said that the sheer space and size of this country is 'one of the great, poorly explored spiritual resources of Australia', since 'in the huge spaces of the outback, ordinary souls expand into splendid [forms]'. Randolph Stow has pointed out that 'when one is alone with [the country], one feels in one way very small, in another gigantic'. The actual ego-personality is dwarfed and made to feel quite small and puny, but the soul leaps out of its human encasement and ecstatically unites with the greater world. 'Alone in the bush, with maybe a single crow... a phrase like "liberation of the spirit" may begin to sound meaningful.'

Suggestions

1. On Day 4, we read that the monk said, "We have become as indigenous as the cottonwood trees. If you take us somewhere else, we lose our character, our history - maybe our soul." How would Tacey have phrased this? What thoughts do you have about the "spirit of the place" that we go to or the where you live?
2. Tacey says, "Our spiritual mode will have to be ecological, a work *with* nature." Do you agree? How can the Wellspring Community work with nature to express our Christian spirituality? Should it?
3. Reflect on another of Jim Cotter's Pilgrim Psalms. Does it connect with Tacey?
Psalm 121: The Pilgrim Psalms: II (p. 278)
REFRESHMENT AND RIGOUR
Have I the courage to trust?
Refrain: Companion on my journey,
Protector at my side,
I venture on the way
in simple childlike trust.

I look towards the mountain ranges,
and fear their lurking terrors.
The pilgrim path takes me through them,
by rocks and ravines, ambush and vultures.
Stormy winds swirl round the summits,
avalanches threaten across trackless screes.
The hills themselves give no courage or strength,
and I turn once again to my God.

Tempted to slide back into mud,
down to the bliss of oblivion,
yet I hear the lure of my Lover,
whispering through my story's confusion.
The God who draws me is urging me on,
and I discover my faltering Yes.
I stumble along the rough pathways,
surprised by a hand that is grasping my own.

To and fro, back and forth,
on the twists of the journey,
courage moves me onwards,
faith trusts in the future;
wisdom makes me pause,
I rest by the stream;
taking time to delve deep,
I listen for the Voice.

I reach for the unknown mountain,
to the summit where God speaks anew,
on the boundary of earth and heaven,
the frontier of time and eternity,
the place of a special revealing,
marked by the stones of a cairn.
As I ponder the codes of my dreaming,
I am surprised by the mystery of God.

The hills themselves slowly change,
never as firm as they seem;
shrouded, brooding, and dark,
their rocks splintered by frost,
worn away by the lashing of storms,
no strength in themselves to support me,
only from God comes my help.

With the wind of the Spirit empower me,
stirring the substance of earth,
moving my innermost being,
yet keeping me from all lasting harm.
Keep watch, do not slumber, Guardian of your people,
shade from the heat, healer and guide.
Nourish the life of my truest self,
from this moment on and for ever.

Deepen my trust in your Presence, my God, for you seem often absent and hidden, and I am afraid of what the way will bring. Deepen my trust.

Day 6: The Spiritual Significance of Place

Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, *Spiritual Literacy: Reading the Sacred in Everyday Life* (Scribner: New York, 1996)

Life is a sacred adventure. Every day we encounter signs that point to the active presence of Spirit in the world around us. Spiritual literacy is the ability to read the signs written in the texts of our own experiences. Whether- viewed as a gift from God or a skill to be cultivated, this facility enables us to discern and decipher a world full of meaning.

Spiritual literacy is practiced in all the world's wisdom traditions. Medieval Catholic monks called it "reading the book of the world." Muslims suggest that everything that happens outside and inside us is a letter to be read. Native Americans find their way through the wilderness by "reading sign." From ancient times to today, spiritually literate people have been able to locate within their daily life points of connection with the sacred.

...

We have sought out cultural resources which are expressive of the quest for meaning and purpose, wholeness and healing, commitment and community, contemplation and social activism. . . . [These } words and observations we have collected.

TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS in *Refuge*

The entire planet is holy ground, but traditionally some places are regarded as being more special than others.

It's strange how deserts turn us into believers. I believe in walking in a landscape of mirages, because you learn humility. I believe in living in a land of little water because life is drawn together. And I believe in the gathering of bones as a testament to spirits that have moved on.

If the desert is holy, it is because it is a forgotten place that allows us to remember the sacred. Perhaps that is why every pilgrimage to the desert is a pilgrimage to the self. There is no place to hide, and so we are found.

THOMAS BENDER in *The Power of Place* edited by James A. Swan

What is significant about sacred places turns out *not* to be the places themselves.

Their power lies within their role in marshaling our inner resources and binding us to our beliefs.

Our act of "holding sacred" is the root, not the place where we choose to carry out that act.

It is in that act that we give places power to affect our lives.

In holding a place sacred, we grant power to a place and acknowledge that power of the place. As an ikon or through its own inherent patterns, we acknowledge its ability to impact our awareness of certain relationships and their value to us.

Sacred places thus forge and strengthen bonds between us and the universe in which we believe.

They empower us by affirming the wholeness of the universe we see revealed about us, and by reflecting our chosen place and role in that universe.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Reflect on another of Jim Cotter's Pilgrim Psalms.

Psalm 134: The Pilgrim Psalms: xv (p. 294)

BLESSING AND BEGINNING ,

I shall be blessed.

*Refrain: Lead us on, Pillar of Flame,
always moving ahead of us.*

We your friends and servants bless you, O God,
as we stand by night in your Presence.
We lift up our hands to the holiest of places,
whose walls pray the prayers of the pilgrims.

To the City of Peace we have come at the last,
and give you, our God, our heartfelt praise.
Bless us and all you have given us,
Creator of heaven and of earth.

Bless us as we turn away from the shrines,
lest by lingering we become pillars of salt,
Even the stones will decay into dust:
the Presence will depart from among them.

Absorbing the gifts our ancestors left to us,
we set out once more on our journey.
What we thought was our goal was but a stage on the way,
and the Spirit is urging us on.

Drawn as we may be by Bardsey and Lindisfame, by Iona and Durham, by Canterbury and Jerusalem, by Santiago and Rome, let us take courage from our ancestors of faith, but let us now seek to make holy the places where we live and to be made holy ourselves by the God who goes on before us.

2. On Day 4, Kathleen Norris wrote, "some ancient wisdom in him had sensed great danger here; a terrifying but beautiful landscape in which we are at the mercy of the unexpected, and even angels proceed at their own risk." Have you ever had feelings like this?
3. In *Subversive Spirituality*, Eugene Peterson discusses angels. He says that in *Perelandra*, C S Lewis describes angels as breaking down the distinction between natural and supernatural. Tacey and Norris have challenged us to connect the natural and supernatural. However, our natural inclination is to separate them. We put scientists and engineers in charge of the natural and pastors and poets in charge of the supernatural. Angels are the witnesses to the essential oneness of the two halves. We need angels to participate in the largeness of God's creation and salvation. They bring the divine presence to our attention. Read Revelation 4-5 to consider again the work of angels.

Day 7: A Liturgy for Pilgrimage: Beginning a New Journey Together

Dorothy McRae-McMahon, *Liturgies for the Journey of Life* (SPCK: London, p.126-128)

OPENING SENTENCES

The hand of God encircles us:

God of our beginnings holding us firm.

The feet of Christ walk before us:

God of our journeying showing us the way.

The wings of the Spirit lift us up:

God who is our company, our energy, our joy.

FACING THE UNKNOWN

We may bring some vulnerable things to a new journey:

fear of the unknown,

a sense of inadequacy,

loneliness in a new group,

anxieties about coping with what lies ahead,

perhaps tiredness or unreadiness.

Let us, in faith and trust, share those things with each other
and be joined in our humanness:

The people name the more vulnerable things they bring to the journey

Jesus, remember us,

as we take up the grave responsibility of being the Church.

Sung three times: 'Jesus remember us, when you come into your kingdom' (Taize)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Hear the word in Christ to us:

Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God. Rise up and walk in faith.

Amen.

READINGS

REFLECTION

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us respond to the word by affirming our faith:

We believe in God

who created us from nothing

and goes on bringing to birth

new things beyond our imagining.

We believe in Jesus Christ

who entered our unknown journey

and experienced all our living,

who walked in our earthiness

and can still be discovered

in our midst.

**We believe in the Holy Spirit
who calls us on to truth
in light beyond our seeing,
who stirs within our being
like a melody of possible music,
who dances on before us
in the freedom of passionate life.**

SHARING OUR HOPES BEFORE GOD

As we begin this journey together,
let us share our hopes and light a small candle
as a sign that the light of Christ travels with us in
these hopes:

Each person names a hope or expectation for their journey and lights a candle

Now let us remember the hopes of the world and the communities we have left behind:

The people share their prayers for others

O God, we place this our life in your hands.

**Take all that we bring,
our gifts and talents,
our longings and our faith
and add your power for life,
for we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER

As we are able, let us make our commitment
to walk together on this journey:

**We will walk this way together,
with Jesus Christ in our midst.
Our hands are open to receive,
our hearts are open to give,
our minds long to learn
and our souls reach out to each other.
This time is eternal time for us
and God will be our blessing.
Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go into this moment in faith
and may the Holy God prepare a holy ground for you,
Christ Jesus take your hand on the way
and the Spirit surround you with grace.
Amen.

Suggestions

1. As you read this liturgy choose Bible readings that you think would fit the theme.
2. Write a prayer or other reflection that fits the theme. You may like to try a different way of writing a prayer:

Shaped prayers

Write prayers in the shapes of objects.
For example,

a prayer for the world might be in a globe shape,
a Lenten prayer might be in the form of a cross,
an Easter prayer in the outline of butterfly wings. '

Poetry prayers

Haiku (Hy-coo) is Japanese poetry that has 3 lines

1st line: 5 syllables,

2nd: 7 syllables,

3rd: 5 syllables

tree, field, mountain, bird
for the beauty of the earth
thank you Creator

Litanies

In a litany, a leader reads 1 or 2 lines with a responsive phrase repeated by the group.

In a Prayer of Thanksgiving, the response could be "We praise you, O God."

In a Prayer of Supplication the response might be, "O God, hear our prayer."

Repetition prayer

(Create a poem prayer by beginning each line of the poem with the same word. For example: Friends)

Friends laugh with me when I'm happy,

friends cry with me when I'm sad,

friends love me even when I'm angry.

Friends are friends, no matter what.

Thank you, God, for friends.

Diamante prayer

Create prayer poems that move you from one word to its opposite, using the following format.

1st line: noun,

2nd: 3 adjectives,

3rd: 5 verbs (ending in "ing"),

4th: 3 adverbs,

5th: noun (opposite to first noun)

anger
red, fierce, huge
bursting, burning, clenching, dissolving, finishing
slowly, steadily, finally
love