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SACRED SEASONS

A Year of Meditations

Beverly Lanzetta



BLUE SAPPHIRE BOOKS



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Preface



*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose
under the heaven.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1

THERE ARE, in every culture, times set aside as special, sacred days. They arrive with the hope of bringing forth transcendent moments. These seasonal rituals are designed to focus on the spiritual, and to infuse the hours with deeper understanding, truer love, and clearer vision. We might hope that every day could be like these, but soon discover that a divine connection is difficult to maintain throughout the year without consistent practice.

In this book of *Sacred Seasons*, each meditation arrives open-hearted, welcoming us to the dawning light of spirit. As a practice of soul meditations, the daily entry is akin to the bead of a *mala* or rosary, that we touch with tenderness and thread with each breath into a prayer. In its own way, the text is in harmony with the manifold rhythms that keep the holy alive, joining in the seasons of praise or lament echoing from synagogue or church, drum circle or sitting zazen. We

call to our Beloved in many ways, our souls longing to be in communion with the Great Spirit of life.

The passages chosen are offered with the wish that our hearts contemplate the blessing of being born into this earthly realm of wonder, beauty, struggle, pain, and hope. Here, words soak into the undercurrent of energies coursing through our bodies, animating our attention, and opening our minds and hearts. This is the river of wisdom that washes over us and inspires us to reach for the holy silence within. For, from silence are born letters and words and sentences. Yet these are empty without the Spirit that breathes life into them. Every true meditation connects us to our Source, not to the writer or the written word but to the dynamism of God's solitude. We do not write. It is always Spirit that writes through us.

Thus, it is not my words—or any other's words—that fill these pages, but the song of the universal call of Spirit that flows through and into each of us. In some true sense, I cannot claim to be the author of *Sacred Seasons*. I place before you the words that Spirit has caused to be released through my hands, heart to heart and soul to soul.

The 365 passages have been selected from my published books, unpublished journals, lectures, poems, and prayers, and meditations posted in online forums. As daily reminders, they can be companions on your journey, little balms of comfort or inspiration, to be savored in quiet moments, connecting you to the stillness within.

The entries are arranged by season, month, and day, beginning with Winter. I encourage you to move through

the pages however best suits you: sequentially on a daily basis; spontaneously opening to a page; choosing a special day, month or season; or starting in December, as the book does. Or, perhaps, when you awaken or before sleep.

There are times in life when we feel we have been touched by something elusive and mysterious, by the hidden workings of the universe, as if Spirit were reaching out to us personally. It is my hope that the meditations in this book will be another touch from the sacred, an opening into the world on the other side of the precious veil that conceals the holy and the beautiful. May each day be one of planting seeds of love. May each day's message be a golden key to unlocking the inner heart, the heart that beats as one with the Divine.

Beverly Lanzetta

Writing in the Desert 2021



WINTER

December I



TAKE OUR BREATH, HOLY MOTHER

Take our breath, Holy Mother.

*May each inhalation and exhalation be a tribute to
your glory.*

*May our hearts burn with the passion of your fire and
your holiness.*

*Take our souls and use them to assuage the wounds;
may they grow stronger to hold more of your love.*

*Take our bodies and make them an instrument of
your peace;
may our actions be worthy of your mercy.*

*Take us and use us, for we long to give our false selves
away.*

*You come upon us silently and in such deep interiority
that often we do not recognize your call.*

*And this is no wonder, since the sound of your words is
so holy and the wisdom of your words is so
profound that even the purest soul struggles to
hold them and bear them in memory.*

*In silence, all that is clamoring and jarring is stilled,
and we are led to the door of your own solitude.*

Amen.

December 2



THE INITIATION OF EVERYDAY LIFE

EVERYDAY LIFE IS an initiation. It is the crucible in which your soul is fired by the flame of the Divine. You have the freedom to make of your life a mundane affair, allowing the flame within to grow dim. Or you can sanctify your life in honor of the true gift of being and the true meaning of existence. You can barter your precious human life for trifles. Or you can honor the profundity of the life you have been given. This is the method of the heart and it is a difficult, arduous path. But so resplendent with joy, suffering is erased.

Love is so purified, so much of itself, that it is the strongest weapon and the greatest force, stronger than any physical prowess. The pure heart can never be destroyed. Resistance is not strength, but weakness. Fear, self-protection arises from inner weakness. Resistance can always be countered, because it is defined and determined. But the Holy, which is dynamic and unconditional, can never be damaged. Flexibility and love are strengths. The Holy is ever renewed and never ceases. This is a truth of ultimate reality.

December 3



HUMILITY

HUMILITY IS ONE of the most personally relevant and meaningful virtues. It is an orientation of great tenderness—the gentle, kind, and quiet. It has to flower in your soul. You have to breathe in its fragrance and feel the quality of being closer to the Holy, to realize why humility is the central work of the monk. Because it is elusive. It is easily diverted by self-will, by the need to be recognized, by petty complaint and judgment, by gossip and refusal to forgive, and by worldly ambition. It gathers strength when we are vulnerable, when we admit that we need each other, when we open our hearts without shame or blame, when we speak the truth—even and often especially—when the other person refuses to receive or hear the truth.

Humility is not false modesty, self-denying, or destructively ascetic. It is, instead, the consequence of experiencing grandeur—a sunset, starry night, rose petal. We are brought to our knees, our hearts overwhelmed with love, when Holy Wisdom speaks. When we encounter the words “humble” and “humility,” let us remember that they are in response to awe.

December 4



BEARING THE HOLINESS OF THE WORLD

Holy, holy, holy . . . the whole earth is full of God's glory.
(Isa. 6:3)

MYSTICISM, if it is anything, reveres and works to sustain the sacredness of the world. Never free from the glory of the unitive vision of reality, the mystic is defined as one who feels something of the wound God feels in our human ignorance and sin, and touches something of the love God pours upon us. On the frontiers of consciousness, she or he lives with a trouble in the soul that perhaps others do not yet feel or cannot yet see. Enraptured by a love for God and creation, it is spiritual love—a love with no self-interest—in us that celebrates the Earth's joys and beauty, and works to transform conditions that breed poverty, war, and violence.

December 5



THE POWER OF CEASELESS, LOVING PRAYER

CEASELESS PRAYER harnesses the soul to God. It is recognition that we are not alone and that the world does not function on our individual efforts. It is recognition that we are connected to something greater than ourselves. Prayer lends fragrance to everything we do. There is a quality of consciousness that is tangible when a person's life is given over to prayer. Certain sweetness emerges from action that does not seek to attain, achieve, or demand. Action that arises from love, from no other intention than to love, is divine action. This is the power of ceaseless, loving prayer. This constant loving of the divine restructures our bodies, minds, and souls. It gives us the strength to bear all things.

December 6



GOD ALONE

THE MONASTIC HEART is the flame that ignites your love; the ember burning brightly that keeps you focused on truth; and the knowledge that all loves are in essence love of the divine. When life is assessed from the perspective of history, desire, progress, possession, achievement, great honor, and wealth, the monastic heart realizes that in all this, there is one underlying fact: God alone. Everything in life can be distilled into this single realization.

December 7



LOVE HAD CLAIMED ME

GAZING ON A grove of ancient redwoods, the trees whispered: *Love is the force that rules the world. See how trees offer a glimpse of love's grandeur, mountains of its endurance, seas of its expanse, rivers of its flow, birds of its freedom, birth of its awe, and death of its mystery. All creation is permeated with Love's perfume, coursing through the heart of the world, inhaled with every breath.*

How often in life do we hide that we love God; that we are devoted; that we want to be a monk. Like peace, spiritual love is a threat to common sensibilities, which in large measure depends on the failure of love to disturb convention. For isn't Love the greatest threat? Infinite Love that is made manifest in our finitude; Infinite Love that has given us everything there is to give and to whom we offer so little, so very little.

No longer can we deny Love has claimed us.

December 8



PERMEABLE SOUL

A PERSON WITH a contemplative temperament often has a pliable or permeable soul, naturally receptive to the Divine. Of course, every person ultimately has a mystical soul. But in a person born with an affinity toward contemplation, the veils between divinity and humanity are thinned. At times, such a person finds it difficult—and often doesn't know how—to distinguish between worlds, or establish boundaries with others. In the Divine, however, boundaries are not necessary. Nothing is rejected; communion between spirit and the soul is a natural flow, like a river moving without obstructions. There is no need for boundaries because nothing is false, nothing is harmful, nothing is unloving. You can be fully yourself.

December 9



THE WILDERNESS OF YOUR BEING

IN ALL MANNER of life, the contemplative person seeks truth—inexorably, even against the lower will. You can flow with or resist the movement of wisdom, but once you step on the path, you will be relentlessly drawn to authenticity. The sooner a person accepts this, the easier life becomes, because you then embrace the hidden parts of your nature, honoring your quest for meaning, and relinquishing self-harm. If you are willing to enter the wilderness of your being, the miracle of transformative grace may be yours. In this blessed state, wounds are healed, and hearts and behaviors are changed. If you have tired of your willfulness, ask in prayer or silence: “Please help me to have the strength to be truthful. Please change my willfulness to willingness.” This will be more powerful and more useful than anything else you do.

December 10



LETTING GO TO HEAL

WHILE DYING, PARTICULARLY in Western cultures, can be difficult to grasp as a mystical form of healing, spiritually dying refers to our capacity for transformation and realization of our divinity. If we did not have the capacity to die, if we did not have the capacity to let go, we would never be able to understand what it means to “float in the vast ocean of being.” We would never understand what it means to have a moment free from the egocentric notion of reality. It is our willingness to spiritually die that signals our ability to love, to seek truth, and to yearn for the Divine.

And because this is so, offering of the self is always involved in healing (in one form or another). Whether we sacrifice our view of reality or the way we approach disease and illness, healing requires a letting go of the attachments of the mind, and of the mental impressions the mind causes. More than deconstructive, healing evokes an offering of our hearts to be more loving, forgiving, and peaceful.

December 11



A DIVINE MISSION

MOST OF US want to be recognized and accorded the appropriate status and reward for our contributions. We desire to fulfill our human potential, and there is nothing wrong with that. But the devotee has a different motivation. He or she pursues a divine mission, the *spiritual* potential that comes about with the total giving of oneself. This is a radically different orientation by which to live. It is a call to a deeper type of surrender, to recognizing the intense, personal action that the Divine exerts on our souls. It is awareness that a path of mystical solidarity with all of creation is imprinted in our beings and is working itself out through each person.

December 12



LOVE CREATES US

LOVE OF TRUTH is at the center of spiritual life. Love seeks truth and adores the unnameable. The illuminated heart loves passionately in this way, not because we know what we are going to find or have proof of God, but because love creates us. Love sustains us. Love is the beginning. We do not love God because we want something. We love God because love is the first prayer, the first passion; love poetry gave birth to us.

When we love purely, without motive, with our whole being, and without desire for love in return, we co-create and participate in the flowing out of love. We don't ask for a demonstration, we don't demand to be healed of errors or wounds. We can make a commitment now, we can vow to love and learn to love the way Divine Mystery loves us.

December 13



EXPANDED HEART CONSCIOUSNESS

A NEW FOUNDATION for spirituality is available today. It is a mothering and feminine spirituality that is not tied to historical sins or religious punishments. It is the emergence of an expanded heart consciousness that is sensitizing us to the tragedy of our separateness, greed, violence, and pain. It is heart consciousness that rejoices in the mystical unity of life and suffers over the violation of the gentle, tender, and merciful. It is a contemplative seeing of the One in everything; an awareness of life that allows us to perceive directly into the interdependence of all realities. It is through the heart that the mystic in us comes into contact with a new life interpretation based on the unity of all creation. Even the word “unity” does not convey the vision that the heart sees, feels, and knows. It is too bland a word to evoke the wonder of belonging to all creation, from the invisible subatomic levels to the immeasurable expanse of space.

December 14



A CONTEMPLATIVE ETHIC

THE AUTHORITY OF a contemplative ethic arises out of a mystical connection to the whole family of creation. This means that the depth of our being is in solidarity with the depth of all beings. The divine spark in the center of our soul is sustained by and has a stake in the flourishing of all other souls and life forms. It also recognizes that our spiritual life is profoundly affected by and dependent upon the spiritual integrity of every other life. We are never free from the suffering and the happiness of the world. The understanding prevalent in many religious traditions, that there is truly no individual enlightenment without the enlightenment of all beings, is mystically true.

December 15



THE SILENT INTONATION OF THE ALL

THE NOTION OF a distant, unfeeling divinity is an antiquated metaphor. We groan with the world; we share in each other's joys and triumphs; and we suffer in each other's, and our own, suffering. The interdependence of the world is shattering to the individualistic self. We are called again and again to being-in-the-world in innermost, unconditional, love. The very nature of our bodies, of birth and death, of family and relationship, of marriage and sexuality, of prayer and devotion are highly personal, relational endeavors. Biologically the air we breathe, and the ecological homeostasis that sustains our planet reflect metabolic, physiological intimacies. Stones and rocks and water, trees and air and wind, deer and eagle and coyote, sun and moon and stars, silently intone the All. We are part of each other's matrix of being. We are meant to nourish each other, and to reflect the presence of wonder and joy. We are part of the reciprocal recycling of life's unbounded, unconditional, generosity.

December 16



THE INNERMOST DIVINITY

CONCEALED FROM OUR deepest nature, we are united in a circle of compassion, we are held by an intensity of divine passion; we belong to each other and to the Holy. We are nothing but belonging to the innermost divinity. Our belonging can never be repealed, cancelled, or destroyed. No sin or error can revoke our origins. Everything that is, began in intimacy. We swim in the cosmic amniotic fluid; we are connected through an umbilicus to the Source, to the Nameless who is Intimacy Itself.

This vision of our founding impetus necessitates a revision of the stories of exodus rooted in human consciousness. We are not in exile, struggling to return to innocence prior to separation or sin, but are breathing in and living out our primary closeness in each moment. Intimacy means that our inner lives are bound to the inner life of Mystery, we share the same life, one and yet distinct. The hidden name of divinity is not infinite and all-powerful, but intimate and all-benevolent. It is not final and only, exclusive or demanding, but the relationship of longing, the love that binds us together as one, making of each moment a prayer.

December 17



LOVING THE HOLY

LOVING THE HOLY in all things is the beginning, middle, and end of devotion. The capacity to love without condition puts our hearts in touch with the original spark that animates creation. The miracle of love is that even if we have never received unconditional love from another person, we have the capacity to be the home of love. We have within ourselves the ability to be the source of love. Love can be our daily practice.

The prayer of the heart seeks to love how the Divine loves—to love without condition—in order to heal the inhibitions that prevent love from being welcomed into the world. In this way, you become a conduit for the Living Spirit. When you love without condition, it doesn't matter if love is reciprocated, because you have touched on the Source itself.

December 18



LOVING OTHERS REQUIRES WISDOM

LOVING INSIDE THE monastic cloister or in the still night when there are no disturbances is much easier than loving God and others on a daily basis. Loving others requires wisdom. We must be wise in order to recognize how those who do not yet know how to love, trample love. It requires wisdom to be mindful of the forces of ignorance that fracture and divide, while at the same time keeping love alive in the heart. True love is capable of holding in unity both our capacity of love, as well as our capacity of un-love. Wisdom does not require that we love to our detriment, love against ourselves, or sacrifice ourselves for unholy love. This is a misunderstanding of love.

How, then, does the Divine love? What is divine love?

December 19



VIA FEMININA IS A RADICAL PATH

VIA FEMININA (the way of the feminine) is a radical path; a path of radical mercy and benevolence, a path of radical intimacy, a path of un-saying, a path that takes seriously embodiment and a return to the Divine Mother. The sins of the soul are not just personal, they are collective and historical. Mystical union must take into account the oppressions of our inner lives and of society. The path itself has to bear the suffering of those divisions. *Via feminina* is a mystical union that subsumes and bears the injustices of the world, and therefore transforms and unites them in one's own soul, healing the opposites, healing the suffering, divesting our souls of subtle forms of violence, exclusion, triumphalism, and superiority.

December 20



IN THE FACE OF INJUSTICE

WHEN GREAT SUFFERING and heartache occurs, as many families who have been separated are now feeling, the reverberation of that pain can pierce our hearts and hopelessness can sneak in. We may take all kinds of actions to try and right this wrong—to side with compassion over violence.

The injustices perpetuated on humanity, which rob us of dignity, become the context within which to revise our notions of divinity. A theology unable to contextualize the vulnerability violated by the brokenness of the world is a theology whose heart has become closed. *Via feminina* embraces metaphors of the Divine as mother, lover, and friend, who cares for and stands by the outcast, the oppressed, and the destitute. The Divine Feminine shares in our hardship and suffers with us, as we suffer whatever diminishes the spirit on Earth.

A theology of radical compassion reminds us that love entails suffering and human responsibility in the face of suffering. The events of the world call us to reorder our hearts in loving solidarity with all creation.

Today, let us pray for the alleviation of injustice and the openness of hearts.

December 21



BECOME A FRIEND OF THE SOUL

THE DESIRE TO PURSUE the new face of monasticism—to be a universal monk of peace—is a response to the fragileness of the Earth and the alienation of our collective psyche. This call arises from the threat under which much of life, human and planetary, now endures and suffers. It is a call to probe more deeply and profoundly the capacity of the human heart, the efficacy of love as a force of transformation, and the significance of mystical participation in the building up of the world. It inquires: who speaks for the soul today? Is it just the material world? Is it just violence that speaks?

The commitment to be a universal monk serves as a counterbalance to the wanton desecration of the spirit in our midst. It is a promise to put our lives in service of the dignity of all beings, and become a friend of the soul.

December 22



WHO WE ALREADY ARE

ONE OF THE GREAT mysteries of life is that we often do not know and cannot remember who we already are. So great a shroud has been placed over our intuitive beginnings, that we must struggle to find our way back to our Source.

One way to assist in healing the cause of our infirmity is to tell new stories of our beginnings. If anything is needed now, it is an awakening of our inner knowing, and of the inseparability of our lives from the generative womb that animates all of creation from within. Somewhere deep within us lies a distant light, a reflection as old as the universe itself, of our beginnings in the mother womb of spirit—a reality so radiant, original, and eternal that it appears to us as new.

We must know the truth of our beginnings to survive the tender kindness, and passionate benevolence that gives life. We suffer no absence of divinity or revoke of love; this force, this Mystery never withdraws. Our challenge is to acknowledge how much we feel and how much we know of suffering and love. Our only safe harbor is to admit the expanse of passion we have for life, while we cling in desperation—or is it faith?—to our raft of nothingness. If we keep steady, if we take up the courage to advance beyond historic conventions and religious names, we will glide toward the distant shore of an impossible hope.

December 23



THE CENTERED POINT OF NOWHERE

CONTEMPLATION CENTERS THE self not in one's religion, family, or nation, but in silence. From this centered point of no-where, all our actions and relations come into focus. As women free themselves from oppression they come full circle, recovering ancient sources of women's wisdom as tools for the betterment of their lives and their relationships. Yet, despite the fact that all civilizations posit the human as expressly capable of transcendence, this capacity to grow toward divinity is probably one of the most difficult of admissions today. If we believe in it in the private sphere, it is virtually absent from the dominant political and social realm. It is almost invariably true that in "polite" company we do not admit our desire to be saints. Our technological world has placed the divine at risk and all but made us ashamed of that superior commitment to personal holiness and human dignity that is the heart of every noble civilization. It is this reclamation not only of women's divinity, but also of the sacredness of the whole world that is urgently needed now.

December 24



THE OCEAN OF DIVINITY

BENEATH RELIGIOUS FORMS, and prior to their emergence, is silence. In contemplative silence spiritualities meet, forming the spoke around which theological openness revolves.

It is in contemplative silence that we know what compassion means. Here we live at the heart of reality, free from any specific theological belief. We are aware that we stand before God was God, we are in the uncreated purity of being. We are unborn. And being unborn we realize that all forms, even our most cherished religions, are but passing waves on the ocean of divinity. Struck by this sight of impermanence, we learn deeper compassion, we learn to liberate ourselves from the attachment to specific theological beliefs.

December 25



LIVING IN GOD'S TIME

THE DEEP SELF is meant to live in God's time. By resting in the holiness of time, we make progress through inaction. When we follow the rhythm of what is eternal and immaterial, we enter an enchanted universe, a freedom of being and a sanctuary of rest.

It is most important to be aware of your deep desire, of what compels you to live each day, and what draws you to the contemplative vocation. You might tell yourself, or maybe you already feel, *I want to be pure of heart. I want to be a mystic. I must know truth. I cannot abide without experiencing the Divine Presence!* Then it is worthwhile to reflect on your particular justification for or resistance to not fully giving yourself to the quest. Have you ever completely offered your life to someone or something? To the Holy One? It is also good to examine what impedes cognitive awareness of—and bringing into reality—the preciousness of life and the gifts of traveling a spiritual path. How would you go about healing?

December 26



THE MONK WITHIN

THE NEW MONASTIC may not be identified with a specific religion or belong to a community. Rather, such a person is staking his or her life on *yes*: the affirmation of love and nonviolence. Being a monk is not attachment to an identity—even to being a monk—but following the call within to honor the sanctity of creation and the miracle of spirit, holding the divine presence in one's heart. It is a commitment to be for the other and not for the self, which yearns to give away all that is petty, constricted, or selfish in one's heart. It is the soul's witness to the tragedies that wound our world, which offers a home for the homeless, a balm of forgiveness for human cruelty and pain.

There is no new monasticism without the aspiration of the person who yearns to be free and—in a gesture of faith—surrenders to Mystery.

December 27



THERE IS NO RULE OF LOVE

DIVINE LOVE IS non-violent, non-dogmatic, and non-absolute, because love is uniquely expressed in each situation. There is no rule of love. Love has no demand. When someone says, “You must be this way!” then that is not love. The reason the soul’s journey can be difficult is because we cannot conceive of a universal force that loves us in freedom—that wants the best for us. When there is true love, when someone loves you as the Divine loves, then he or she wants the best for you.

Love heals all things. It mends wounds and soothes the broken-hearted. Love also is wise; it simultaneously recognizes both the mystery of altruistic love and the limits of conditional love. Just as God doesn’t pour the fullness of divine love into the soul all at once (because we wouldn’t be able to hold it), so do the wise measure love according to the person’s need. Wisdom may say, “I am not able to give now.” The body may say, “I cannot do more now.” The wise know that certain limitations of love are gifts of compassion.

December 28



SEEDS OF LOVE

THE BELIEF THAT we do not deserve love injures our hearts; these pains perpetuate self-rejection and shame. Divine love is never absent, even when we fear its withdrawal.

In darkness, dryness, and turmoil, even when prayer is not possible, seeds of love are planted in the soul, waiting to be watered by the power of love within you.

December 29



PLEA FOR CREATIVITY (I)

WE PASS THROUGH a dark night of our collective humanity as we search for the foundation of our divinity. We are purging ancient sins or other kinds of failings, seeking within ourselves a greater truth. We know something else exists, some exuberant life which explodes within our beings. As a human community we are grappling with what it is and how to get there. In life we have glimpses of a wholeness which defies categorization and we call for it, even though it seems to have no name. Nuclear disarmament, self-help movements, war protesters, women's rights, human rights, environmental concerns, and other issues of our time cry out for recognition and for consideration of our destiny as one whole and inseparable body.

December 30



PLEA FOR CREATIVITY (2)

*May we, as holy beings, be called to embrace wisdom—
Holy Wisdom—and to celebrate the sanctity of all creation.*

Amen.

THIS COLLECTIVE INTONATION cannot be other than the plea for creativity, for belonging, for ecstasy, and for our place in the divine scheme. It is our souls that speak in darkness, crying out for recognition. It is the voice of our union with life, where we are intimately connected to all creation, which cannot withstand the separation of our collective selves. It is this silent voice which pushes aside considerations, rules, religious separatism, nationalism, karma, sin, and other human sufferings, and sacrifices itself for the redemption of us all.

December 31



THE TOTALITY OF LOVE

MANY BEFORE US also have felt the inextricable bond of spirit-matter, and yearned for a spirituality of the whole cosmos, a global spirituality. Something—a vantage point, a knowing—was sought; a mystical awareness that all matter, all living forms, and the entire orb of existence are connected by energetic bonds of affinity. The Spirit imbues *all* life and until we come to an all-life, all-body understanding of Spirit, we will not know our true selves or our place in the universe. Spirituality is not tribal or selective, not confined to members of a privileged group, but the discovery of a reality, a principle, that governs the whole of life, like the action of atoms and molecules, or the equation of water. It is global because it is intrinsic to everything; it is not partial, selective, or fragmentary but a vision of creation as an organic whole.

Only when we experience and understand how *total* love is, will we walk the path of the mothering spirit of life.