

Dear Michael and Carolyn,

July 16, 2023

I need you to do something for me. I need you to thank my friends for me. Please thank the beautiful people on the “seeing off” email list for their prayers, for thinking of me on full moons, for their friendship.

It’s happening friends! Transformation is happening. Healing is happening. Initiation is happening! All in pretty remarkable ways and degrees, I believe in part, thanks to everyone’s prayers.

As I’ve said “yes” to the call I received from Earth and the more-than-human world, it almost seems like they have taken note and are going to special lengths to show up for me now.

Perhaps the most profound transformation is occurring in how my capacity to love myself and hold myself dear throughout the day are growing; I am learning to trust myself, trust my connection with life. This seems to be a golden key unleashing so much! It’s as if the treasures and gifts secreted in my soul have all along been waiting for me to truly behold myself with tenderness and warmth before revealing their magic.

Immersion in the powerful presence of Wild Nature, fasting from modern world stimuli, while doing practices that return me to feeling, rather than escaping, embodied present moment experience, can be intense. This long cultivated tenderness towards myself, along with years of prior experience in solo retreats, and a well-primed sense of humor (not necessarily well delivered but that is another matter), has made what might otherwise feel like a pattern-interrupt bootcamp, into a generous, affectionate and deep-rooted process of unlearning, grieving and healing personal and centuries-old patterns and stories of white-male-enculturation. As these patterns loosen and dissolve, I’m experiencing a remarkable growth in my connection with Spirit, with my Guides, with suppressed intuitive and imaginative capacities, and with the more-than-human world that’s teeming with teaching, feeling, and opportunities for relationship. **As relationship with the beings around me grows, so does my resolve and excitement about illuminating and alchemizing anything inside that would otherwise inhibit my ability to hear them and be the best apprentice, friend and ally I can be.** A self-celebrating loop!

This has been a time of many tears. It’s almost felt like an extended grief ritual, with the wilderness as my holding community. The potency and love of this container, tended over months (and years), now seems to welcome forth places of grief from within and from our world that are calling for compassionate attention. As I let myself weep, for the pain I touch in myself, my family and friends, my ancestral lineage, and world, I’m becoming more soulfully intertwined with the tender-hearted web of our sacred world and the more this web seeks to employ me in service to it’s healing and becoming. The exact alchemy is a mystery to me, but friends, grief *is* rewiring my being in a profound way. I’m becoming more and more one-heartedly devoted to life and to the medicine I’m here to bring.

As I grieve, for Orca, for Wolf, for my parents, for those caught in the prison system, for my nibblings' generation, I move closer to Mother Earth's heart and I feel a bond, sometimes even an alliance, forming between my heart and the heart of those I grieve for. Can you feel the magic and power being courted here?! It goes further. In grief and in prayer, I sometimes feel myself linking up with other Souls, Spirits, Ancestors or Mountains who are also grieving and praying for this particular person or situation. I'm finding I have access to resources I didn't previously dream were available to me - depths of forgiveness, perseverance, compassion and intuition that seem to come through me not from me. I intuit that this increasing permeability and emergent prayerful partnering is foundational for the gifts my soul is here to bring.

I've begun to wonder if my whole life has been preparing me to be a good friend to Orca, Moth, other species, and to the Mother of the Lands I'm honored to relate with, so that I might serve as a worthy voice for them and help attune and partner my human community with the other-than-human world.

Now, I've been called to come alone to remote nature to remember my basic belonging to the wild web of life, to sit in prayer council with Mother Earth and the more-than-human world - nourishing alliances, receiving teaching and blessing, and allowing myself to be readied for my role in the Great Turning of our times.

Several months into this solo time, "Layer 2" of the call came. It came at a time of much uncertainty and challenge. The situation with the beloved Squirrels living in the walls of my cabin had become quite hard. The dear woman renting to me had just told me that I needed to move out. My finances were nearing their end. I began thinking, "Maybe this is the finishing place? Maybe it's time to go back now?" There was a sweet joy at the thought of returning and finally getting to be in the company of my beloved human friends that I miss so dearly.

Resting in bed, an all-consuming feeling of communion crept over me - goosebumps from head to toe - a meeting between my soul and the soul of Earth. Sudden heart-felt resonance with widespread suffering and unrest in our world sent tears streaming down my cheeks. The level of close-in-ness and direct communication with Earth and my kin of other species that unfolded in these precious minutes is something I've been courting for over a decade, perhaps my whole life.

In this time of unfettered togetherness, I sensed my initiators- Earth, Whale, Snake, Great Mystery- are not through with me yet. I felt them beckoning me to take yet another faithfully foolish step by moving further into the wilderness and dedicating another 5 months to being alone with them. I don't remember a time of ever feeling more certain of my destiny or more honored. Nor of knowing more belonging, fellowship, and mutual indebtedness with our whole earth family. There was no deliberating that followed, only more tears as a knowing of what is mine to do filled my whole being. Wonder. Serene Joy. Purpose. Grace. All of this coupled with a sense of profound anguish and responsibility. From where I sit now, it doesn't actually feel like I have any other choice but to try. Doing my best to say "yes" to this call is being in fidelity to all who I love in this life and to the very love that gives me life.

How do you imagine it would feel, in the midst of planetary crisis, to kindle sincere fellowship with the land and the other species around you, rooted in a burgeoning ability to intimately hear and dialogue with their souls? How might this dialogue and fellowship inform our daily lives, from the smallest personal decisions to our biggest collaborative attempts to meet the crises before us in a wise and inclusive way? Are their particular species asking for our attention and alliance at this time? If they had your listening ears, what would they say? It's these questions and more that are alive in my heart as I seek to step into this 5-month journey I've been called into.

Robin Wall Kimmerer astutely writes, **"...long before that error was promulgated, people knew the trees were storytellers. But then we forgot. Or were made to forget by the ones who chased divinity out of the forest and into the sky. The stories of trees were erased from our knowing."**As we've forgotten how to respect and listen to the trees around us as sacred, how are we doing now at respecting and hearing the sacred in our fellow human beings around us? Does this error not lie at the heart of the destruction, violence and widespread injustice we see on Earth today?

I want to be one who helps court divinity back into the forest, back into our daily lives. I want to be one who helps my culture see and honor the divinity in wolves, in fish, in the soil, in creeks and mountains and in each other. My prayer is that I may be part of many who begin to walk the healing and initiatory journeys necessary to court a remembrance of our capacity to revere and partner with the living world all around us.

I think this kind of remembering is a seditious act. I think that my learning to love myself, to grieve, to wildly praise and behold the divine forested hills above my cabin, subversively shakes at the foundation of the error promulgated long ago by the culture I come from.

It's time our culture changes. Not a human-intellect driven makeover but wholesale change. My prayers are with the species threatened with extinction. My prayers are with indigenous peoples all over the globe who have been trying to get us to wake up and those who are now risking their lives defending their homelands. My prayers are with the financially underprivileged and oppressed who are disproportionately hit by the crises unfolding and at greatest risk in the face of pending environmental breakdown. My prayers are with our kin, our elders of other species trapped in laboratories, factory farms, black market trade, puppy-mills, backyard cages and other forms of degrading human abuse. My prayers are with the young ones and their future.

I love you Michael and Carolyn. I'm really looking forward to the day we meet in person again. So much of what I'm learning here and who I'm becoming is rooted in your good mirroring, in the ways you've lifted me up, in things I've learned from and admired in you and in the heart of devotion we've fed together. My journey is what it is because of the love of our friendship. I hope we get to spend the rest of our lives supporting each other to be the best agents of cultural revolution we can be, and find much wonder, joy and companionship along the way.

Love,
Mitchell

