

chapter 3

by Kimberly Koczan Flory

Just before getting Brown Taylor's latest book, I was pondering the map of the Earth from space that shows how brightly lit the richest lands are. The United States' borders being completely obvious in our flagrant use of lighting, all day and night. I am the one the neighbors comment about, saying, "It is so dark at your house at night that I never know if you are home." I am unplugging any possible appliance, especially if it has a light (blinking lights are pretty well relegated the same status as glitter and walking on glass.) Brown Taylor's love affair with the dark helps me know I am not alone. I yearn for the physical dark, for ways to connect to nature...even though I as guilty as the next person to run away from my interior fears.

My family is just getting back to our 'routine' from a recent Sabbath Rest that took us overseas for eight weeks. We traveled from Morocco to the Catalonian region in Spain, then on to Italy for a month before winding our way through the length of Croatia (and other beautiful neighboring countries) and a final week in Turkey. I have been a tiny part of so many beautiful encounters with people, lands, waters and other beings and I am truly grateful. I am still reintegrating and feeling a bit out of my groove, as if I am walking at one pace while the treadmill is moving at a slightly faster pace. After many sincere greetings of "welcome back" I said as naturally as if I had said this new-to-me-phrase a hundred times, "I think I need to be **welcomed forward.**"

Last week I recounted to a wise farmer friend that one of my favorite aspects of the Mediterranean adventure was seeing the stars, moon, planets and Milky Way. At first seeing the real sky was as almost a surprise and then greeted with intentionality as I engaged with the movement in the night sky. I marveled how deeply I missed really noticing, let alone being able to just see, the stars. From the same viewpoint each night for three weeks on a hill in the farmland of Tuscany, Italy I saw from one clear perspective, the dance of the moon, Jupiter and Venus, so brilliant and seemingly intimate. My long-time friend and I mourned the loss of the night and seeing the night sky due to light pollution, even in rural Indiana where we had once worked together at a church camp. And he reminded me that when our utter reliance on fossil fuels fails, it will be the brightly lit parts of the map that are in shock while the majority of the world wakes to a new sunrise and greets the new days as any day before it. It won't be so jarring to welcome forward a way of living in the dark and the light.

How might we be part of the world, part of the galaxy, and welcome forward a way for humans, birds, and animals to be back in the natural rhythm of night and day, rest and activity, reflection and

response? Truly the important work starts with ourselves. Just like proclaiming to a pacifist means recognizing the best and the worst possibilities inside ourselves, learning to walk in the dark, as the chapter notes, means noticing deeply why we may be afraid to face the dark rather than embrace it. Perhaps where you are, you have been watching the meteor showers of Perseus this month...or perhaps wishing you could gaze on the starry skies, or merely wish you remembered the joys of these summer nights in the midst of a frenetic schedule. What are you noticing within as you make space to notice the great beyond?

Kimberly Koczan-Flory is a member of the OTC Board and is a spiritual guide based in Fort Wayne, IN. She is also an educator for sustainable food systems and holistic living.