Newsletter of The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans



Issue 122 Lent 2017



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### Lenten Thoughts

Sr. Ade Kroll



Greetings friends,

Below is a reflection my spiritual director mailed me via US Postal Service. I share this with so you may reflect on or with it as you may... Thom Longino, n/OEF.

Lent: A love yearning

Stardust Wednesday: You are stardust and to stardust you shall return.

This is a look at Lent from the larger perspective, inclusive of all that the Creator of Love has done to reveal Presence of Love and how it is among us.

The Spirit of Light and Love splashed out in stardust—the particles gathered became something new. In the process many were smashed and became something else. All is intended toward union!!! This splashing out released a catalyst of an ongoing creative process leading and summoning a deep desire to something outside themselves, to attempt to unite with one another to become something more from the particles, force fields, atoms, molecules. This gathering and uniting brings about more diversity and beauty. This process of transition from one form of creation to another can be violent, or evoked by violence, unstable at times in order to achieve what makes union possible.

From Stardust which evolved and united came EARTH. All kinds of being evolve including LIFE, to provide new kinds of union and ways to cooperate in finding union such as insects and flowers, swarms to ward of predators, seeds and birds. The radiance of love evolving is revealing the BEAUTY of LOVE unfolding in so many ways.



(Continued on page 2)

#### Lenten Thoughts... continued

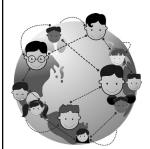
In the human, this cosmic force of love, this attraction to "more" shows in scientific discoveries, creation of beauty, (gathering of money and things--!), as well as compassion for those in need. Human love and knowledge is embedded like a web of threadless fibers over planet Earth. LOVE is that thread. In creative energies, in solidarity with the vulnerable (beyond human) in awareness of pain and suffering in the world and the planet, to call forth compassion, forgiveness, sacrificial love is what it means to still be stardust seeking union in ways that are greater than ourselves.

The only force available to the human community capable of providing the ENERGY needed for union is LOVE.

In solidarity with the most vulnerable of creation (all beings) we beg for mercy, attempt to open eyes to the pain and suffering, to evoke tender compassion, forgiveness, and sacrificial love. (To give up can lead to pride or guilt—to give toward is to contribute toward the solidarity just mentioned).

So Lent is not about being a poor sinner—but is a call to be a participant in the weaving of human love and knowledge, to care for one another, to communicate with one another (including trees and ants!!) and to collaborate in imaging outcomes and accept a goal greater than ourselves—in which all may be one.

As LOVE was in the beginning—evolving in the now—and to which all tends.





#### **Chapter 2017!!!**

**Greetings, All!** Everyone is invited to join us in Chicago for Chapter 2017!

Dates: Thursday, June 22 - Sunday June 25

At The Cenacle Retreat and Conference Center: 513 W. Fullerton Pkwy; Chicago, IL 60614

Chapter registration is available online at https://ooef.wildapricot.org/events

If folks need assistance they can call me: 802-683-9276 to get registered. Pay-what-you-can for OEF community ends April 30.

Chapter is \$300 for Thursday through Sunday. Wednesday arrival adds \$100.

Peace,

John Michael Longworth, OEF Chapter Registrar



Br. Elijah & wolf pup - Chapter 2016



Brer Bruce James & fiddle - Chapter 2016



### A Message From Our Council



Imagine this scene:

One sunny winter day in Winter Park, Florida, 3 Franciscans walk into Smokey Joe's BBQ Shack.

The casual observer observes:

Avid hiker-woman, plaid shirt, jeans, sturdy hiking boots.

Slim professional musical man, slacks, neatly-pressed white shirt, red tie.

Silver-haired woman, colorful Disney-turistastyle tunic, leggings, sandals.

Later joined by smiling woman, head cleanshaven, jeans, simple brown t-shirt stating subtly and literally: "Let us see what Love can do."

Missing in this bright moment: Tall man of meaningful tattoos, gentle man of Oregon who will later join these 4 by skype.

January 3-5, 2017, Face-to-face Council Meeting #2.



"An odd mix...", observes the casual observer. Yes. Your Council. Our Order. An odd and beautiful mix.

While every meeting

remains, in some ways, incomplete, each meeting builds on those preceding.

Since Chapter/Convocation 2016, your new Council has met 16 times by telephone conference call and twice face-to-face.

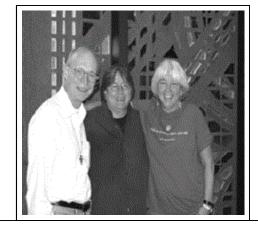
What have we to show for all this? Let us offer a few thin slices: 1. First and foremost, as a Council, we have grown in love for and in respect for one another, each of us offering the gifts which come from us most easily and most naturally. We do what we can. Pray we will do what we must.

Each gives. Each matters. Not one of us would touch this job alone. With gladness we do it together.

- 2. We are strong in our love for and in our commitment to our little Order (this means all y'all) as we seek to follow Jesus in the footsteps of Francis and Clare of Assisi.
- 3. Hot-off-the-press major changes: (Please do not skip this part nor skim too quickly.)
- \* Sister Faith has asked to relieved of her (excellent and truly valuable) service as Treasurer.
- \* Nancy has asked to be relieved of her (excellent and truly valuable) service on the Council.

We affirm -- with immense gratitude -- the gifts of both.

On Behalf of the OEF Council, Shoshanah



L-r: Br Louis, Sr. Markie, Sr Shoshanah



# Formation Station



#### Welcome new novice Fred Jaxheimer!

I was privileged to welcome Brother Fred as a novice in a ceremony that took place as part of his church's regular Saturday evening service on Feb. 11 at 5PM. We enjoyed a beautiful afternoon together as he and his wonderful wife Marian took at us for lunch to enjoy delicious Italian food and good conversation. Fred gave us a tour of the nearby Byzantine Franciscan monastery. We then celebrated in worship followed by a lovely dinner with some of Fred's good friends and his spiritual director. We do plan to get together again.

David Delacriox, OEF





### A Franciscan Manifesto for Divesting Your Ego

By Br Coyote Nabhan, OEF

- 1. Divest yourself of any monetary or material possession that is there for the sake of your ego and identity.
- 2. Do nothing that fosters greater social disparity; divest yourself of any real or perceived privileges.
- 3. Wear no uniforms or logos that identify yourself with a class of "winners."
- 4. Recuse yourself from assuming or maintaining positions of power, authority or expertise.
- 5. Get free of defining your true self through your accomplishments.
- 6. Refrain as often as humanly possible to "show off" by drawing attention to your "gifts," skills, or talents.
- 7. Never take a first class seat or an elevator when there is open seating or stairways.
- 8. Abandon any possessive or defensive. position in conversations, conflicts or debates.
- 9. Listen more than you talk, and be silent enough to listen to than other-than-human world.
- 10. Laugh insanely at how often we are distracted by consuming things we've never ever needed.



### Before we Gather...



For your prayerful consideration in preparation for Chapter 2017 in Chicago, IL

## From the Formation Team (Anjelika, John Michael, Kiwi):

At the request of the Council, we are informing the Professed members of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans of two important items for our community to explore. Both are related to Formation process and come from the team as a whole, expressing our prayerful unity.

**First**: We would like to recommend Louann O'Banion for solemn profession under the following guidelines:

- 1. All of her formation work is complete and the requisite letters of support are received.
- 2. We take note of her prior participation in a Chapter meeting and in Regional Gatherings.
- 3. She will be available to the session on elections via telephone to share her story and answer questions.
- 4. Designees of the Chapter serve as in-person witnesses to a ceremony of solemn profession that will be recorded to share with the community.

Louann has health complications that would make it very dangerous to travel to Chicago, but the team and her formation counselor all feel the Spirit's urging to present her to the Chapter meeting and allow for prayerful discernment on her situation.

Second: We would like to open a time of discernment with the possibility of amending our Statutes to provide a long-term mechanism for international candidates to participate fully in OEF while recognizing the unique challenges these candidates face. Multiple trips to a North American Chapter Meeting raises the spectre of excluding otherwise excellent candidates.

We do not have a specific proposal here, the community may decide to change nothing, or to grant a two-Chapter exemption on a case-by-case basis, or to authorize a Regional Gathering to serve as an ad-hoc Chapter to witness solemn vows, or some other option that we haven't imagined.

The team is in unity that the process for welcoming international candidates is unclear, dissuades some great candidates, and preferences people with substantial resources.

We are also in unity that the body of the Professed should take the time to carefully discern if OEF is a North American Order with outliers, or a community capable of building expressions in various parts of the world.

We so look forward to praying our way through these questions at Chapter with all of you!

#### **An Important Reminder**

Reminder! Nancy Menning is the OEF Treasurer. Contributions can be made by sending a check (made out to "Order of Ecumenical Franciscans") to Nancy at:

Order of Ecumenical Franciscans Nancy Menning, Treasurer 521 N Aurora St Ithaca, NY 14850







### Badaliya

#### By Sam Loudenslager, OEF Postulant



The encounter in 1219 between St. Francis and the Sultan, Malik al-Kamil, during the Fifth Crusade is one of the episodes in the life of Francis that has drawn me to Francis. During the recent U.S Presidential Election with suggestion of a registry of Muslims, I felt both a sense of profound sadness and disgust. In response I found myself reading short internet biographies of Charles de Foucald, a Roman Catholic priest who spent much of his life living with the Tuareg people of the Algerian Sahara. Over the course of his life, Charles de Foucald concluded that he understood his mission of evangelization of the Tuareg was one of simply trying to meet their needs, as he was able, and being with them. While there are other examples of Christians honoring and loving their Muslim brothers and sisters, the example of Fr. de Foucald led me to the discovery of a name I had not encountered previously - Louis Massignon, a scholar of Islam who was devoted to improving the perception of Islam and broadening Catholic-Muslim relationships. I also was pleasantly surprised to discover that Louis was a member of the Third Order of St. Francis, and the founder of the Badaliva Movement.

Massignon was not raised in a religious household but as a scholar he experienced a profound conversion experience to Christianity while studying in Iraq while a young man. By 1934, Massignon and Mary Kahil, an Egyptian Christian, took a vow of Badaliya (substitution) which was a vow of offering their lives for Muslims. This vow took place at an abandoned Franciscan church at Damietta, Egypt. Many years later this vow led to the creation of the

Badaliya Prayer Association. The Badaliya Prayer Movement continued in France and Egypt until sometime after the deaths of Massignon and Kahil. From what I can tell, Dorothy C. Buck, something of a student of Massignon, revitalized the Badaliya Movement in 2003 in the United States and it continues today. The basis of Massignon's efforts in Badaliya was simple: the importance of sacred hospitality to all he encountered as he experienced it through his experience of Islam and the critical role of intercessory prayer.

How this is affecting me is simple. I find that as part of my formation with OEF I am called to pray with and for the Muslims in my community. This means building bridges with others and being in support with them publicly regardless of the circumstances. I am in the initial part of this ministry and trying to find one or two Muslims in my community that are open to gathering together in a very specific and intentional way to pray together and share our lives; and to love one another as we are loved by God.

Peace, Sam (OEF postulant)





### Active Hope: A Meditation\*

by Kristin Mercer Text: John 11:17-27

Hope sees life not as what it is, but as what it could be. Hope sees life not as what it is, but as what is should be. Hope sees life not as what it is, but as what it will be



\*\*Editor's note: This is an Advent meditation, but seems appropriate for Lent, as well.

Hope will not allow the one who hopes to sit passively by, allowing the circumstances to remain as they were when they were encountered. Hope challenges until change becomes real.

When we read the story of the raising of Lazarus in John 11, we hear the despair in Martha's voice as she looked Jesus in the eye and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

How the world would be different if he hadn't let her down! If he had just shown up when he was supposed to, then her heart would not be rent in two by the death of her brother. Her brother would be alive and well.

But Martha's despair was not really just about the emotional hardship of losing someone she loved dearly. Emotional hardship is hard enough with the perennial feelings of loneliness and grief that will inevitably crop up, especially around the sacred holy days and festivals.

But Martha was also losing life as she had known it. She once had the kind of home that could welcome people in with hospitality at the grace of Lazarus' provision, but now she would be looking for the hospitality of others.

No woman could survive on her own in the ancient world. On the number line of power, she held the unenviable place of zero. She would have no other choice, but to beg or prostitute herself out to the men of the town.

She wasn't a young woman, so neither option would be a particularly prosperous engagement. She would most likely go hungry most days, and once the town turned her out of her home she would be sleeping on the streets.

Her station was gone. Her security was gone. And yet, she waited for the coming of Jesus, ever hopeful. When Jesus finally arrived in town, she went out of her house and she met him. Her hope led to her action against the reality she saw looming ahead.

Passivity and hope cannot coexist. This hope radically transformed Martha's life. She did not just change her own situation, but that of her sister Mary also, and that of her entire neighborhood.

She would keep her home clean, so that the strangers who passed through town might have a neat space to sleep. She would keep her kitchen stocked, so that the beggars would not have to fear where their next meal would come from.

Hope sees life not as it is, but as what it will be.

God, who awakens hope within us, may the hope within the Advent season challenge me to actively make this world a place that looks more like your kingdom. May I seek peace for all people. May I seek justice for the wronged. May I seek forgiveness for those who have done wrong. May I receive all that you have given me in gratefulness, so that I do not take it for granted but generously share it with everyone in need. Amen.

- Kristin Mercer works as an administrative assistant at Mission Waco. A native of Belton, she recently graduated from George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco with a Master of Divinity degree. Her dream, she says, is to encourage literacy in low-income neighborhoods.

\*Reprinted from Sacred Seasons: Worship Tools for the Creative Church." Advent/Christmas issue, 2016; Seeds of Hope Publishers.

Submitted by Katie Cook, OEF





### **An Unlikely Activist**

By Christine Petersen, OEF



So, what makes a life-long Franciscan introvert, a true believer in "use words if necessary" into an activist? What does it take to pry her out of her inertia to stand up against injustice? I recently found the answer to that question when I was compelled to attend my first march on the state capitol!

First, a little back story: As many of you know, I live in the woods of Central WI in a resort area surrounded by 4 man-made lakes and acres of vacation property. We are also surrounded by cranberry bogs, potato farms and miles of pine forest. These forests of tall jack pines were planted and maintained by local paper mills, until the mills started to close and land was sold off. This area is known as the Central Sands of WI. As the name implies, the soil here is mostly sand, which means it can only support certain kinds of agriculture, and is vulnerable to over-use of water.

Into this idyllic place has come the threat of a new entity: a giant factory farm known as a CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation). In our case, it is a farm with 3500 cows kept in barn stalls with concrete floors, hooked up to milking machines 24/7, with no opportunity to graze, or even lie down! It also means 73 deep-water wells draining our lakes and streams, and acres of crop land irrigated with manure spraying and chemicals, all of which will sift right through our sandy soil into the ground water. Our beautiful resort area will be ruined. lakes polluted and dried up, drinking water rendered unsafe, and property values will plummet. The corporation owner behind the CAFO owns several of these money-makers, and is a millionaire several times over. It's simply a matter of greed at the expense of others. It is easy to see the impact of this type of farming on the communities where he is already operating. It is frightening!

Along with this goes a state government that is doing all it can to weaken the only regulatory agency standing between us and this disaster. The DNR is currently doing environmental impact studies on this, and if it is split up and de-funded as proposed, it won't have any power to oversee these

powerful corporations. It is David VS Goliath all over again!

So, the people of this area have formed a coalition called "Protect Wood County & Its Neighbors." We have been fighting to keep this CAFO out for over four years by rallying citizens, confronting town boards at town hall meetings, and sending letters and e-mails to state representatives.

In January, we heard about a plan for a Water Lobby Day at the state capitol in Madison. Several other small grassroots coalitions like ours were planning to converge on the capitol to demand protection of our water from various threats, large factory farms among them. A benefactor had hired a bus company to provide six busses to pick people up at various locations in the state, and one was coming to Rome! So it was, that on Feb. 8, 2017, we boarded a bus to caravan down to Madison. Our bus was full, and when we arrived we could see that the others were full as well. We had a turnout of about 400 people!

The plan was to spend most of the day visiting the offices of our representatives to drum up support for our cause; then meet for a rally with speakers from the various groups involved; followed by a march around the capitol rotunda with signs. I had never done anything like this before, so I attached myself to some more experienced friends.

The first representative we spoke to said all of the right things about how he supported our cause. He also lives in the lakes area of Rome. However, we had heard this from him before. He is also good buddies with the rich CAFO owner, so he soon started talking about "compromise." It was an eye-opener for me to see how quickly he backed down from his earlier statement that he is against having a CAFO in our area. It was disheartening. The lake this guy lives on would be the least affected.

So, on to the second representative. This person has not been in office as long, and is less experienced in dealing with the public.

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#### An Unlikely Activist ... continued



When he saw the crowd outside his office door, he looked terrified. He tried to avoid coming out to talk to us (we wouldn't all fit in his office), but he didn't have a choice. Some of our group challenged him on several issues, and he wasn't really prepared. He tried to say he supported us, but he also began talking about "compromise." The comment from him that caused the biggest reaction was when he said, "But [the CAFO owner] has a lot of money invested in this already." It was then that he got an earful of how much we have invested in our homes here, and the fact that this is all we have. Even our physical health is at risk.

At the rally, we heard speakers from the other coalitions involved, and had a speaker of our own. We heard about struggles for water rights and conservation going on all over the state. We were able to support and encourage each other.

I learned a lot that day about how to try to get the will of the people to those in power. I don't know how much difference we made for our own cause, but it seemed that some of the representatives were listening. I guess 400 people can make a big impact! I was impressed with the fact that people were able to remain respectful and peaceful while sharing some very strong opinions. No one got violent or was arrested that day.

So, would I do that again? Possibly. Marches and rallies still aren't really my thing, and crowds make me nervous, but if I think it's important enough, I might be a little more willing to stick my neck out. There is a lot going on in this state, and in the country as a whole, that I believe is unjust, unfair, or simply ridiculous. Good people may not have the luxury of staying silent much longer. One day, we will have no choice but to act. When the time comes, can you do it?



Factory farm milking

## Surprise!



We thought it was the burden of our birth, The price we had to pay for being men To wade knee-deep in slime upon the earth, Trade blow for blow and barter sin for sin. We took our twisted souls to be

the rule;
Whoever thought
it could be
otherwise
Where gnarled,
repulsive midgets
went to school
To stunt gnomes
of still more
shrunken size.
And we were



angry to be broken so... Free to resent and

freer still to

blame

The ugliness we seemed too cursed to know.

Cynics we were! Or cynics we became, Then he came forth to our astonished eyes, Whole, and man, and cried, "Surprise! Surprise!"

- C. W. (Wally) Christian \*Submitted by Katie Cook, OEF

#### Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Submissions for the Post-Chapter 2017 issue of "Fiddlesticks" are being accepted immediately.

Deadline for submissions is June 30, 2017.

Send submissions to Sister Chris at capoef@solarus.biz

or snail-mail to:



Christine Petersen, OEF 853 Norwich Ct. Nekoosa, WI 54457

Thank you!





## Newspapers, TV News, Online News, Fake News, Alternate Truths, Facts. YIKES!

By Janet Bircher, BSN

It may seem that everywhere one turns, the results of this past U.S. election are creating more angst and division than cohesion and peace. Rhetoric has run amok, flaming bitter feelings on both sides of the political aisle, infecting normally non-political arenas such churches, community centers, medical facilities and yes, our families and friends. OEF is not immune to a myriad of feelings we all find ourselves experiencing.

When Sr. Chris asked me to write an article about how one with disabilities is affected by today's events, I couldn't help but think that those with chronic and/or rare diseases are not the only ones sitting on the edge of their seats waiting for the next Oh-geez-you-got-to-be-kidding-me moment. Members of the LBGTQ community, the elderly, the poor, blue collar workers, the homeless and all the advocates, legislators, family and friends of those affected have all expressed their concerns through peaceful protests, petitions, town hall meetings, testimonies, etc.

As Franciscan Christians who are called to Social Justice, how can we effectively help those around us when we are feeling the weight of these common concerns ourselves? Originally written in response to our last election to help support her Congregation, a local Parish Nurse here in MN, Janet Bricher, BSN, wrote an article to help identify where one is at in the process of processing such current events. In addition, Janet offers some practical ways individuals can cope to break the "hamster wheel of anxiety." And what's particularly helpful with her writing, is that these suggestions can be applied to any area in which one is experiencing or sees someone else struggling with anxiousness.

Prayerfully submitted, I hope you find this article helpful. During this Lenten Season, the time of more intense Examen, may you find some peace and a sense of action as a Child of God; a fellow human and a lover of all God's Creation. - Kathleen D., n/OEF

"Obviously, this past week in politics has been beyond anything many of us have witnessed before. Some people I've spoken with were prepared for this outcome and for others it has been an unexpected assault to values and trust. A wide range of emotions exist in our community and families. Some are satisfied that issues of concern might now be addressed; some folks are pragmatic; some are feeling anger, fear, grief, and hopelessness. Strong reactions to real events are normal.

"Rationally, we know productive ways to move forward will take some time to figure out and to shape. There will be opportunities for discussion and action in the weeks and months ahead both in our beloved Gloria Dei and in the community at large.

"Our bodies' stress hormones however, are not rational and are responding to our strong emotions. Stress -hormones are only meant to benefit us for a short time, and then they become destructive to our body's immune system, our mind and spirit.

"If shock, fear, anxiety, grief or hopelessness is what you are feeling in the aftermath of this election, take a moment to step back and check in with yourself.

## "These are concerning signs of stress to watch for:

- Decreased ability to concentrate
- Difficulty accomplishing tasks
- -Shakiness, tight muscles and tension
  - Loss of appetite
- Loss of interest in things we usually enjoy

(Continued on page 11)

#### Newspapers, TV News, Online News, Fake News... continued

- Difficulty sleeping
- Turning to drugs or alcohol to get by
- Loss of religious faith, loss of hope
- Nightmares

#### "Now, how can we improve our abilities to be resilient and strong for tomorrow and whatever is ahead? What is it you need most right now?

- Make sleep a priority- not too much, not too little, keeps our immune system strong, regulates mood and stress.



- Explore ways to relax your mind and body, slow abdominal breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, visual imagery, mindfulness, listen to music, do creative arts, and make music. These things activate other parts of the brain.
- Spend time with little children, babies, and pets if you can, otherwise watch them from afar.
- Get out into nature
- Look at the night sky
- Eat better and feel better. Limit fast food and junk food. High sugar, high fat meals, and overeating have a negative impact on mood, as does eating too little.
- Does keeping up with the news or social media make you feel better or do you need to just stop for a while?
- Reach out to others.



- Support each other.
- Check on each other.
- Be kind.
- Be of service to someone else who is in pain.
- Remember from the Bible: "Be still and know that I am God."

- Just be, just breathe. Some days that is enough to be grateful for.
- Recognize the role thoughts play in causing stress. Are negative thought loops or unrealistic expectations serving you or anyone else well?
- Journal: Capture those thoughts and document them. Problem solve on paper. What are the lessons for today? Then remind yourself those thoughts are in a physical place now and allow your brain to let go of them. Won't it be interesting to look back at this time in history if you choose to save the journal?
- Find balance between worry and play and balance in work, home and community.
- If feelings of anxiety, trouble concentrating and coping, are going on too long or are intense, talk to a mental health professional. Your physician or pastoral staff can

help you find someone.









- Seek help or tell someone to get you help immediately if you feel you can't cope any longer.
- Ask yourself, "And how are the children?" Now go through the list again with them in mind."
- ~ Janet Bricher, BSN is the Parish Nurse at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, ELCA in St. Paul, MN. Janet's background in working in a university setting for both an in- and out-patient setting has given her fellow Congregants 20+ years of experience and wisdom to serve the community effectively. Many thanks to Janet for giving OEF permission to reprint her article and for her Calling.



Worry is like a hamster wheel, it gives you something to do, but it doesn't take you anywhere." Fiddlesticks c/o Christine Petersen, OEF 853 Norwich Ct. Nekoosa, WI 54457 U.S.A.



### A Scottish Plessing



May the blessing of light be on you - light without and within.

May the blessed sunlight shine on you like a great peat fire,

So that stranger and friend may come and warm himself at it.

And may light shine out of the two eyes of you,

Like a candle set in the window of a house, bidding the wanderer come in out of the storm.

And may the blessing of the rain be on you, may it beat upon your Spirit and wash it fair and clean.

And leave there a shining pool where the blue of heaven shines, and sometimes a star.

And may the blessing of the earth be on you,

Soft under your feet as you pass along the roads,

Soft under you as you lie out on it, tired at the end of the day;

And may it rest easy over you when, at last, you lie under it.

May it rest so lightly over you that your soul may be out from under it quickly; up and off and on its way to God.

And now may the Lord bless you, and bless you kindly.

Amen.