Earth Keeper Update: January 2025: Talkin' About the Weather

I'm writing from sunshine and 22 degrees with temperatures expected to drop down to 16. Yes, it's cold! But according to NOAA, the federal agency which has been making records of tides, wind and weather available to the public since 1807, today is an average January day in Maine despite the alarming headlines about an "Arctic Blast." In fact, it's a bit warmer than average. Nonetheless, I'm grateful to be bundled in warm clothes so that I can go outside and move a bit. A walk outside is my pharmacy, my spa, my home gym where I can activate the body's factory for vitamin D production in the sunshine, clear winter congestion with a brisk walk, and feel the cold pack of frozen ground for a minute or two as I lie down and look up beyond the evergreens and into the clear blue sky.

At the shore, waves are rippled and frozen in their wake, adding to quiet stillness.
The eagle, osprey, gull and eider move silently but the loon's call reaches me from an island across the water. The wind has picked up and I begin to take the headlines to heart. I guess *it is* cold! It's time to go in, time to use the special gifts of human nature--imagination and intellect--to bring warmth.

As I follow deer paths through the forest I don't see songbirds, but later on, near the fire that the forest gave me, I read the Maine Bird Atlas and learn that there are other residents in these woods. The atlas was last completed in 1983, and I'm not sure if changes in climate have brought new birds or made the Maine woods uninhabitable for others. Perhaps climate change will bring a little bit of both, just as the invasive vines that are pulling down spruce and fir are thriving further north than they had when temperatures were colder. It's interesting to keep track of the plants and animals that have appeared and disappeared. What have you noticed? If you would like to participate in an updated version of the bird atlas, you can check out how to do so, here.

Meanwhile, it may also be interesting to share this sort of information with people in your own home and in your parish. Are there stands of trees inhabited by bird friends you've known your whole life? Do you miss swaths of woods that have been absorbed by sprawling suburbia? Perhaps the cycles of nature and cold winter darkness serve as a backdrop for the cycles of our own lives—not only the celebratory ones but the times that are filled with losses and sadness, the times that need nourishment, healing, and rest.

Your observations and thoughts about nature are important. Please share them with Earth Keepers in your church. Earth Keepers are here to share blessings as well as the losses we've noticed. Earth Keepers may also take measures to heal.

I'm so grateful for the lengthening days. They offer hope. I'm also glad that it is still possible to absorb the special quietude of the Maine woods, away from cars and shops and the troubles of life. Doing so can get me through the darkness of winter. This month's Earth Keeper Update is a meditation on that. It is a wish for a peaceful 2025, a prayer for guidance from God that we awaken our senses and feel the effects of Earth, Water, Wind, Fire, Soil, Stone, Bird, Critter, the glue that keeps the stars in the sky, the sky that connects earth to space, land to sea and yes, human to human in love and in kindness for all of the above.