

# CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

## Moonbeam and Mercy

BY JER

Most days I am late returning to my home nestled in the woods. Lately, I am greeted by a deer I have named Moonbeam. She has two large white circles of fur around her eyes. When I look into them, I see two full moons. I also see compassion in the center of each.

Moonbeam walks closely to my car as I arrive home, and then she follows me, somewhat from a distance, all the way down the sidewalk. She waits at the bottom of the stairs as I slowly ascend, find my keys, and unlock my front door. I always look back at her and say, "Hello, Moonbeam." I don't speak to her until the last minute because I don't want to scare her off. I find comfort in the way she escorts me to the door; it is as if she is a presence of peace for me, a witness that I have worked and that I now need rest. In silence, we co-exist. I believe that Saint Francis of Assisi was right. I believe that animals can understand the Peace of God.

The older I get, the more I find inspiration in Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Catholic Benedictine monk, author, and lecturer who finds inspiration in Zen Buddhism and interfaith work. I am greatly inspired by his unwavering dedication to finding gratefulness in every moment.

In one of his talks, Brother David speaks about his breath practice. While being mindful of his breathing, he recites to himself, "Lord Jesus, mercy." This abbreviated version of The Jesus Prayer keeps him grounded as he twirls his own makeshift rosary ring. Being influenced by Brother David, I now find myself looking for gratitude in every moment, even the most stressful ones. For example, no matter how trying my day is, I am grateful for Moonbeam's willingness to walk me home. Nothing can take away the beauty of that compassionate act. And when I find my days filled with meetings, grading, and other tasks related to my role as a director on campus, I say to myself, "Mercy." This is a reminder that just as the Divine has mercy for all, I should have mercy for myself.

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# Sympathies, Concerns, and Congrats

Congratulations to:

- **Dr. Thom Ales '11** (Mathematics) and his wife, Tabitha '11, '23 (M.Ed), on the birth of their son. Edwin Thomas Ales was born on August 31. He weighed 9 lb., 1 oz. and was 21 3/4 inches.



## Upcoming Interfaith Holidays

September 6-7

Krishna Janmashtami  
(Hinduism, Krishnaism)

## Dates to Remember

Friday, September 8 - 4 p.m.

EARTH SPIRITUALITY Interest Meeting  
SLC Terrace Level



## *Passages...through grief*

### A Grief Recovery Program

*(for all significant kinds of loss)*

**Beginning September 14, 2023**

**On Zoom - 6:30-8:30 pm**

**For more info, [www.passagesthroughgrief.com](http://www.passagesthroughgrief.com)**

**Susan Williams at 434.944.8458**

## Moonbeam (cont'd)

This academic year, when you find yourself in the middle of busy days or stressful situations, remember to have mercy and compassion for yourself and for others. Perhaps, like Brother David, you can find a short prayer or mantra to recite as you pay attention to your breath. In the end, we are loved and held by the sacred force that weaves together all of existence. Sometimes that force is most visibly present in parents, partners, friends, or even a kind animal who waits for us each day. Just remember to be good to yourself and to others. Just remember to look for the various forms of peace and the moments of goodness.

For more information about the Spiritual Life Center, including info on student spiritual life student groups, go to our webpage - link in the email signature. You can also visit our [Linkt.ree](http://Linkt.ree) (Link is in email).