

Let
There
Be
Light



Introduction

The following reflections were offered as a Lenten programme to encourage reflection on the Christian Story in the light of the New Cosmology. As a help with the reflection process, a set of guidelines were offered. The guidelines were just that – guidelines. They were not intended in any way to constrain your own personal approach to the material.

The set of reflections is now being presented in booklet form, and a further invitation is being extended to you to gather a little group of “seekers” together so that reflection on the material can be shared with this group.

Deep within each one of us is a wonderful capacity for Divine Awareness. Like any other human capacity, this capacity needs to be nourished by spiritual practice. Opening up our minds and hearts to the enthralling mystery of Divine Presence revealing itself in the story of the Evolving Universe is both an opportunity and a privilege.

*“The heavens declare the glory of God,
The vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork.”*

Psalms 19



The Eagle Nebula

Guidelines for Reflection

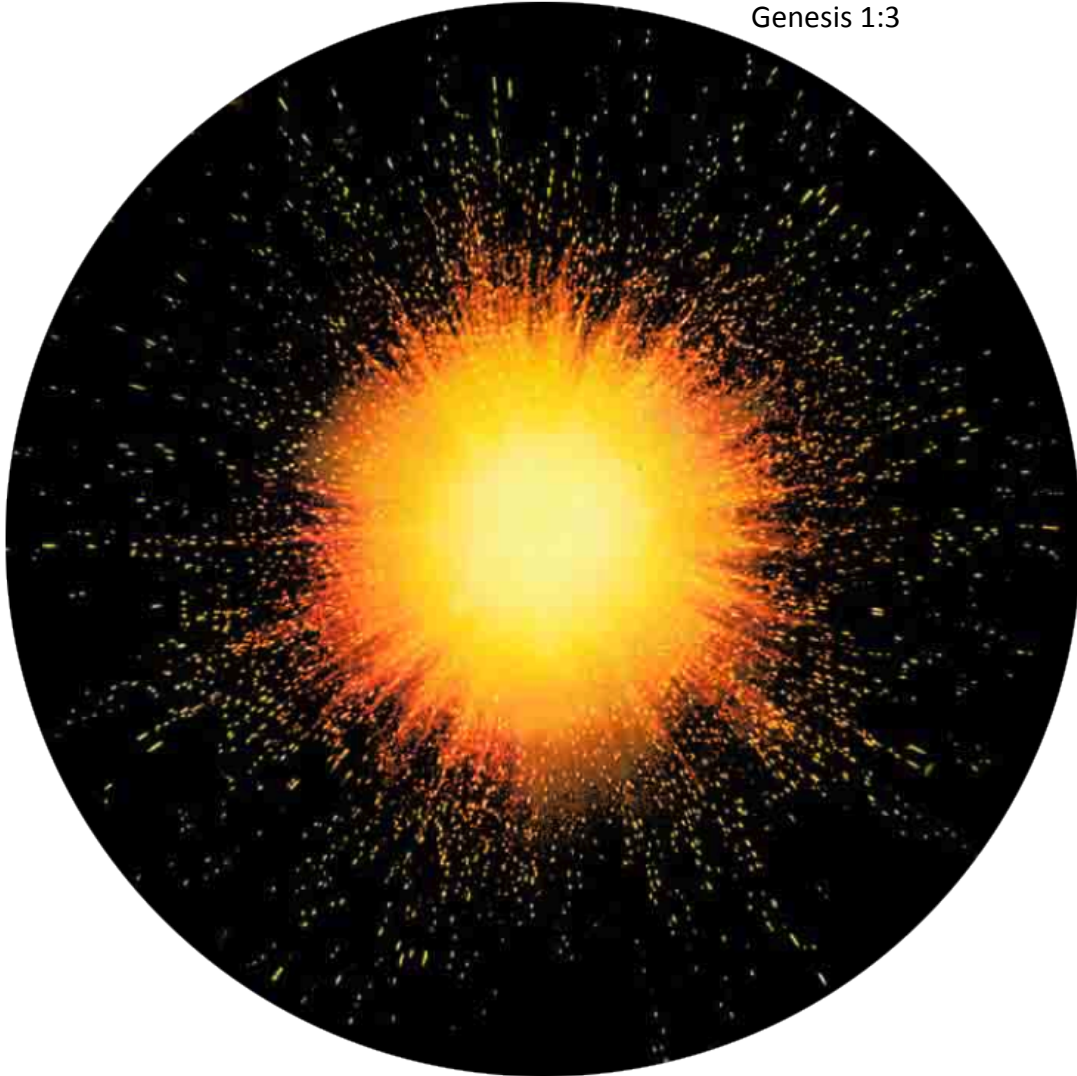
- 1. Read the text slowly**
- 2. Allow the beauty and wonder of the images to speak to you**
- 3. Reflect on the questions**
- 4. Keep a record of what this experience has been like for you**
- 5. Repeat the reflection if drawn back to it.**
- 6. Find a soul friend with whom you can share your experiences**
- 7. Share the good news. Invite others to visit the site.**

First Reflection

The Initial Flaring Forth of our Universe

And God said, "Let there be light", and there was light. God saw that light was good."

Genesis 1:3



Reflection on the New Creation Story.

Our universe exploded into being 13.7 billion years ago with the flaring forth of the primeval fire ball. All of the energy that at this very moment floods through our bodies, and through our world, and that sustains us by its presence, was gifted to us in that moment of Divine Creativity. What began in that fiery irruption was a story of wondrous, creative possibility. This story has been unfolding ever since, revealing in endless diversity, the mysterious presence of Divine Power, Energy and Beauty.

In the Genesis account of creation, when the author begins to tell the story of the origins of the Universe, the very first words the author placed on the lips of the Creator were “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3), and when the scientists begin to reveal to us the New Story of the Universe they begin by telling us that The Universe began in an explosion of light.

One can only wonder at the profundity of human insight that enabled human intuition some three thousand years ago to penetrate to the very depths of the mystery of the Universe as modern science has only recently revealed it. The Cosmos is the First Book of Revelation to paraphrase St. Thomas Aquinas.

Questions for reflection

Where in your life do you experience Divine Power, Energy and Beauty?

How do you make yourself available for this kind of experience?

How do you express appreciation for these gifts?

I see His Blood upon the Rose

I see his blood upon the rose
And in the stars the glory of his eyes,
His body gleams amid eternal snows,
His tears fall from the skies.

I see his face in every flower;
The thunder and the singing of the birds
Are but his voice—and carved by his power
Rocks are his written words.

All pathways by his feet are worn,
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,
His cross is every tree

Second Reflection

The Death of a Star – The Birth of the Solar System

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Jn 12:24

The mystery of death leading to new life is at the heart of a Christian understanding of life. It is also at the heart of the life of the Universe. It is coded into the Universe genes. Were it not so, life in our solar system would never have come into existence.

All stars have a natural life span. They are born through the alluring power of gravity and, depending on their individual mass, they have a predictable life span. Giant stars have a relatively short lifespan, whereas medium sized stars like our own sun can live for ten billion years. The death of a giant star is something awesome to behold. It is called a supernova. The intensity of light emitted in a supernova explosion exceeds that emitted by an entire galaxy.



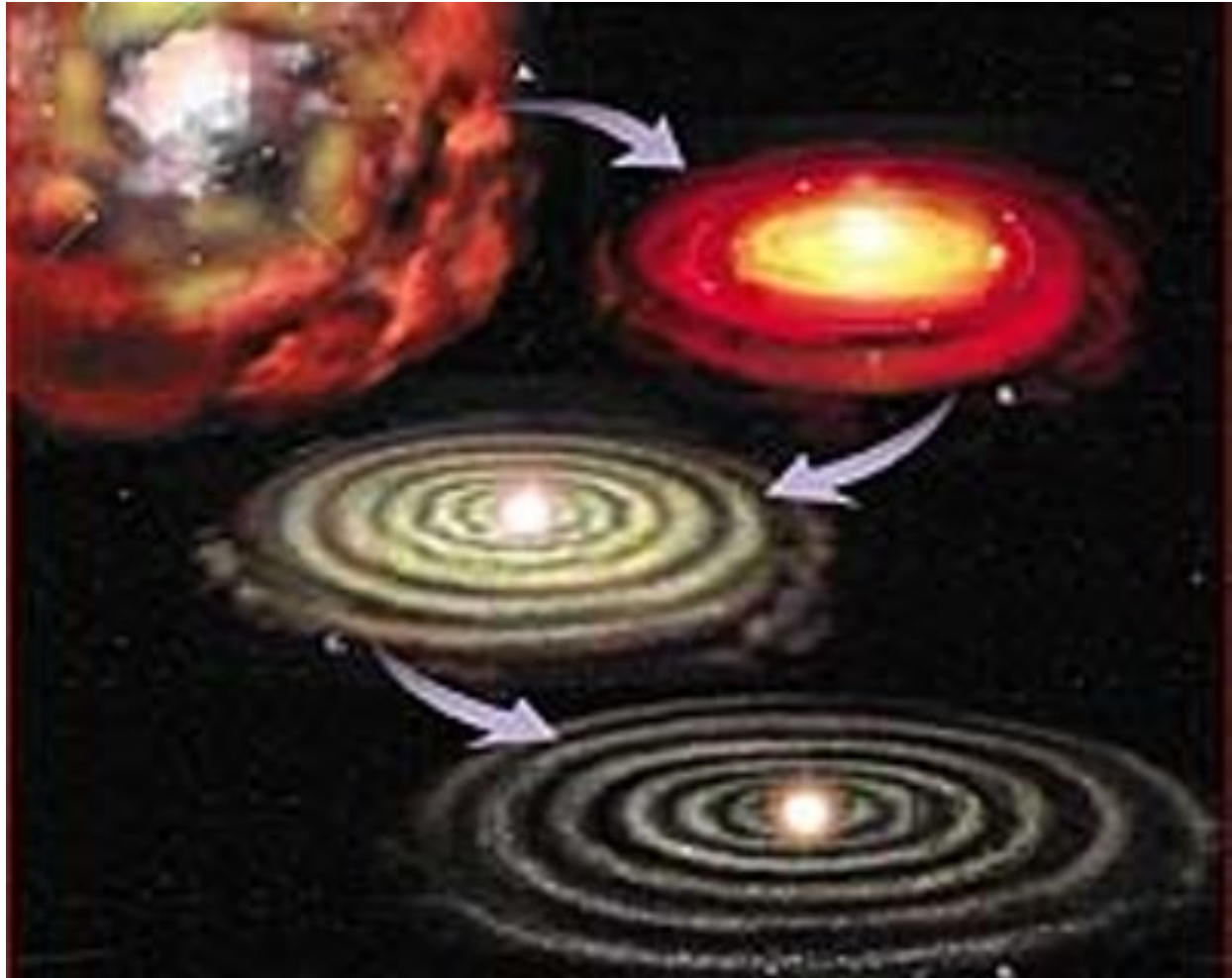
Hubble Telescope Image of a Supernova

A Dying Star

Some five billion years ago a giant mother star died in a fiery explosion that lit up the entire heavens. Let us call this mother star Eiriu to link her to the Mother Goddess of our Celtic ancestors. In her death throes, Eiriu produced all of the elements that human science has catalogued in the periodic table. All of the natural

elements that are heavier than hydrogen and helium require the death of a mother star to bring them forth. In her dying moments, Eiriu gave birth to all of the ingredients essential to the formation of our Solar System. Over the next hundreds of millions of years, the good shepherd Gravity gathered all the flying debris that resulted from the death of Eiriu, and by its power of allurements slowly moulded together our Solar System.

The Evolution of the Solar System



Reflection

Just as it is in the life of the Universe, the dynamic of death leading to resurrection is a central element of the Christian vision of life. It is a dynamic that is operative all through life, not just at life's end. It is also a dynamic that is operative in human institutions, and human relationships. Lent is a time to deepen our awareness of this process of death and resurrection at work in all that surrounds us. Oftentimes, something we value needs to die so that something new and more valuable still can come forth. Knowing when to let go so that the new may be born

requires great detachment, and great trust in Divine Providence. Not every death leads to resurrection, and for the believer the challenge is to trust, as Jesus did, that "...All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well" (Julian of Norwich)

Questions for Reflection

What needs to die in me so that something new can be born?

What new thing is struggling within me to come to birth?

What new gift is being offered to me that I am fearful of accepting?

What kind of death is going on in our Church at this time?

What new life do you think is being facilitated by this death?

(You might equally apply these questions to institutions such as your religious family, your critical relationships)

Listen

with the night falling we are saying thank you
we are stopping on the bridge to bow from the railings
we are running out of the glass rooms
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky
and say thank you
we are standing by the water looking out
in different directions
back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging
after funerals we are saying thank you
after the news of the dead
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you
in a culture up to its chin in shame
living in the stench it has chosen we are saying thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators
remembering wars and the police at the back door
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you
in the banks that use us we are saying thank you
with the crooks in office with the rich and fashionable

unchanged we go on saying thank you thank, thank you

with the animals dying around us
our lost feelings we are saying thank you
with the forests falling faster than the minutes
of our lives we are saying thank you
with the words going out like cells of a brain
with the cities growing over us like the earth
we are saying thank you faster and faster
with nobody listening we are saying thank you
we are saying thank you and waving
dark though it is.

W. S. Merwin

www.drewdillinger.org : This is the website of Drew Dillinger, a disciple of Thomas Berry and an ecological poet. Here he can be heard reading his own poetry. This is a site worth visiting.

Third Reflection

Mother Earth and the Emergence of Life

“Let the Earth bless the Lord: praise and glorify the Lord forever...

Bless the Lord every plant that grows ...

Bless the Lord seas and rivers, praise and glorify the Lord for ever

Bless the Lord all animals, wild and tame”

Canticle of Daniel



“The Universe itself, but especially the Earth, needs to be experienced as the primary mode of divine presence.

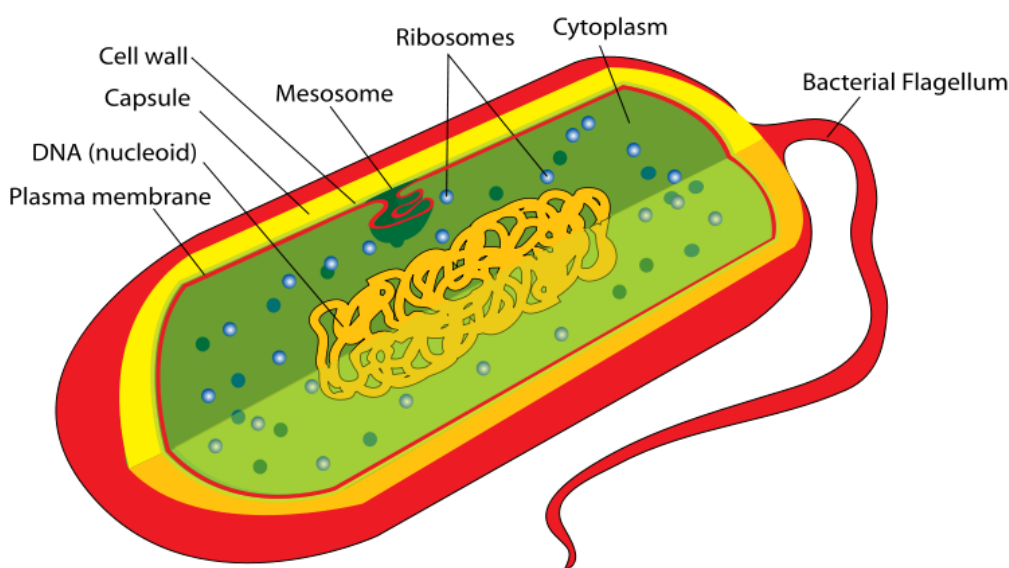
Thomas Berry in Dream of the Earth

About five billion years ago, after the death of a giant star in a supernova explosion, our solar system began to take shape. The self-organising power of the Universe, was at work from the beginning, bringing order out of chaos. It took about five hundred million years but, by that time, the solar system was looking very much like it looks to day – an average sized star, the sun, surrounded by eight planets and one dwarf planet, Pluto.

The young Earth was a place of indescribable chaos. There were heaving, murky seas, tumultuous earthquakes, fiery volcanoes, blazing meteorites raining down on Earth's surface from the skies, raging electric storms, and an atmosphere devoid of oxygen. Here in this great cauldron of primeval chaos, Divine energy called forth life from the most unlikely of places, the very Earth itself.

The very first manifestation of life was a tiny bacterium, the prokaryote; yet within this tiny creature was the potential to generate the vast complexity of life that has come to be known as the biosphere. Divine energy is capable of calling forth the most breathtaking outcomes from the most unpromising of beginnings.

The First Living Cell



Ever since it first emerged Earth has nurtured life with great care. Life has not evolved in a haphazard way through a series of random events. Within the dynamic of life there has been an inherent sense of direction. The vector of life has always pointed towards ever greater complexity.

For nearly four billion years now, Earth, has been nurturing the flame of life. Over this vast arc of time, there have been five major extinction events, the last occurring a mere sixty-five million years ago, bringing about the demise of the dinosaurs. At the end of each of these extinction events, Earth has fanned the flickering flame of life into ever greater manifestations of complexity. This is the mystery and wonder of life – it is as if there has been in life an irresistible urge to get to the complexity that is the human being.

Bio-diversity



Reflection

The giving of New Life is at the very heart of the Christian message. Jesus came that we may have life and have it to the full. To be fully alive is to proclaim the glory of God. All of life is vulnerable, and new life is especially vulnerable. Because it is vulnerable it needs to be cherished and appreciated.

Questions for Reflection

Where is God for you in this New Story of how life emerged upon the Earth?

When has the emergence of new life evoked profound wonder and awe in you?

Does the season of Spring have any special meaning for you?

How do you nourish the season of Spring in your own life?

Many of our human institutions are in need of new life, how do we form alliances that facilitate the emergence of new life?

Little Poem for Niamh

Your arrival was late –
Advent in July.
Your birth a revelation.
The moment forever etched
in memory
lingers
to be recovered as a blessing.
My maternal examination of you
one of awe, delight and wonder.
No need to check for faults.

Pure perfection in miniature
every detail a work of art.
Pretty puckered lips
eyebrows defining character
tiny fingers unfurling
to clench waiting grown up fingers
A connection is made
promise of a life-time's love.

Monica O'Reilly

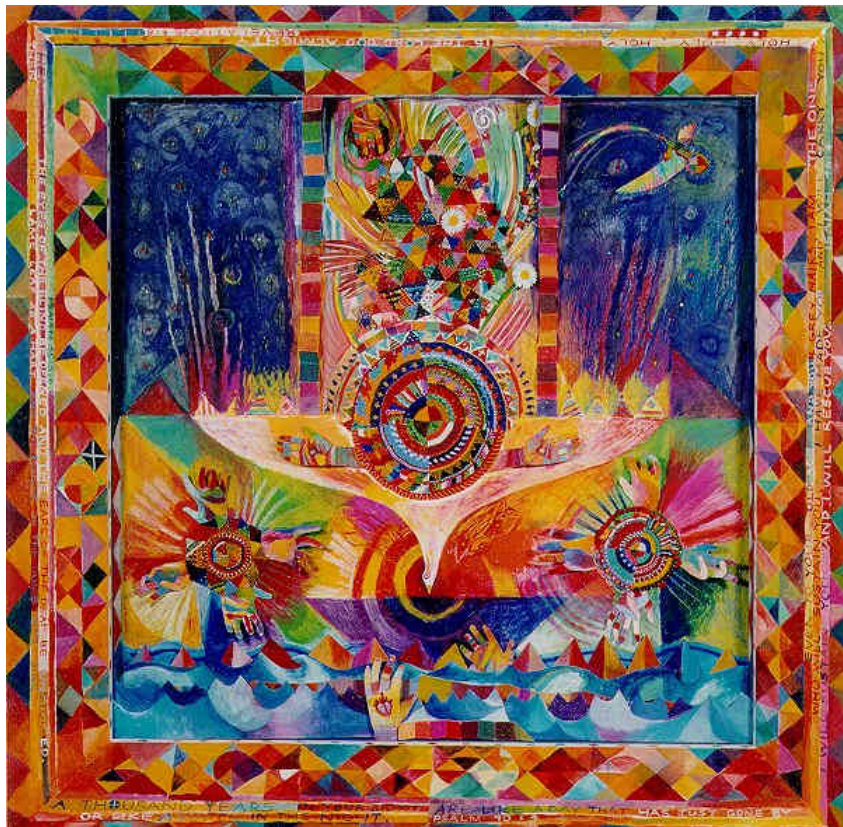
Fourth Reflection

The Emergence of the Human

“Yet Thou hast made humans a little lower than God,
And dost crown them with glory and majesty!” Psalm 8:5

From the outset, it must be admitted that the full story of human evolution has yet to be told. There are still many gaps in our knowledge because the secrets of life are not always amenable to the investigations of science. While conceding the incompleteness of our knowledge, the search for answers to the mystery of our origins has yielded a rich harvest of information. As a consequence, a New Story, a story full of awe and wonder is gradually being revealed to us. In this New Story, our Creator God is revealing deep and wonderful truths about Divine Mystery, and about the nature of life itself. Our God is revealing new facets of God’s power and majesty through the knowledge and insight that the human search for understanding has made available to us.

Seamless Tapestry of Life



From the emergence of the first living organism, the Prokaryote bacterium, almost four billion years ago to the emergence of the Homo sapiens some two hundred thousand years ago, life is a seamless tapestry of infinite variety and ever increasing

complexity. It is a beautiful fabric woven of the thread of evolving life. We humans, the latest embellishment on this tapestry, are intimately related to all of the life forms that have ever existed. All of us had our origins in the first Flaring Forth 13.7 billion years ago. All of us are the fruit of a Divine Creativity that is ceaselessly calling new life forms into being through the evolutionary process.

When Francis of Assisi called all the living creatures of the Earth his brothers and sisters, he was uttering an insight more profoundly true than he could ever have imagined. Our genes have come to us as an inheritance bequeathed to us by countless generations of living organisms from the first bacterium that inhabited the primal seas to the most complex forms of primate life that were our immediate ancestors.



Canticle of St. Francis

Hominid species have appeared more than once upon the Earth

How the human species emerged upon the Earth has excited intense scientific interest long before the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species in 1859. Research

on the fossil record, and the uncovering of the structure of the human genome, have shed immense light on this intriguing story. Although human life appears to have surfaced independently more than once, palaeontologists now believe that modern human beings are all descended from *Homo sapiens*, a species of human that emerged in the Rift Valley of Africa about two hundred thousand years ago. Furthermore, studies of mitochondrial DNA indicate that nearly all humans living outside of Africa today have descended from a common maternal ancestor who lived in Africa about two hundred thousand years ago. With the arrival of the human, an enormous new power asserted its influence upon the Earth- the power of conscious self-awareness.

Human Beings are the Self-Awareness of the Universe.

The emergence of the Human was an awesome moment in the history of the Universe. For the very first time, the Universe was capable of contemplating itself. Through the wakening eyes of the first humans, the Universe saw its own wonder and beauty for the first time.

We humans are the self- awareness of the Universe. Through our awareness, the Universe contemplates itself. This vocation to be the self-awareness of the Universe is a vocation that is at once a great privilege and a great responsibility. It has put in the hands of human beings tremendous power, power that can be the source of enormous good and almost incredible evil. The choice is ours to make.

“I am offering you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life then so that your descendents may live.”

Deuteronomy. 30:19

Growth in Consciousness

Over the last 200,000 years practically all of human evolution has occurred in the human brain. With the development of the brain came the capacity for deeper and deeper levels of consciousness. The belief now is that any future evolution of the human will take place at the level of conscious awareness. If we wish to flow in harmony with the creative flow of the Universe then we need to follow the path of deeper and deeper awareness.

We are the awareness of the Universe



Reflection

The season of Lent provides us with an opportunity to reflect on how we have made use of all of the gifts that Divine Providence has bestowed upon us, particularly the gift of conscious self-awareness. We are the only living beings that have the capacity to immerse ourselves in Divine Mystery, to reflect on how we engage with life, and make decisions that affect the healthy functioning of the Planet, and all of the living species that it contains.

Questions for Reflection

What does it mean to you that you are related to every other living thing that exists upon the Earth? Have you ever stopped to wonder about this?

How do you experience your real, organic kinship with every other human being on Earth?

What new face of God is being revealed to you in the New Story that science is now revealing to us about the origins of the Universe and of life itself?

To grow in conscious self-awareness, we need to become deeply reflective people. What do you do to deepen the reflective dimension of your own life?

What does it mean to you that we humans are the conscious self-awareness of the Universe?

In what ways does conscious self-awareness place immense power and responsibility in the hands of humans?

Poems for Reflection

A Blessing Presence

May you awaken to the mystery of
being here and enter the quiet
immensity of your own presence.
May you have joy and peace in the temple of your senses.
May you receive great encouragement when new frontiers beckon.
May you respond to the call of your gift
and find courage to follow its path.
May the flame of anger free you from falsity.
May warmth of heart keep your presence
afame and anxiety never linger about you.
May your outer dignity mirror an inner
dignity of soul.
May you take time to celebrate the quiet miracles that seek no attention.
May you be consoled in the secret symmetry of your soul.
May you experience each day as a
Sacred gift woven around the heart of
Wonder.

John O'Donoghue

Messenger

My work is loving the world.

Here the sunflowers, there the
hummingbird -

equal seekers of sweetness.

Here the quickening yeast; there the blue
plums.

Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.

Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?

Am I no longer young, and still not half-
perfect?

Let me

keep my mind on what matters

which is my work,

which is mostly standing still and learning
to be

astonished.

The phoebe, the delphinium.

The sheep in the pasture, the pasture.

Which is mostly rejoicing, since all the
ingredients

are here.

Which is gratitude, to be given a mind and
a heart

and these body clothes,

a mouth with which to give shouts of joy

to the moth and the wren, to the sleepy
dug-up

clam,

telling them all, over and over again, how
it is

that we live forever.

Mary Oliver

Canticle of the Sun

Most high, all powerful, all good
Lord! All praise is yours.

Be praised, my Lord, through all your
creatures, especially through my lord
Brother Sun, who brings the day; and
you give light through him. And he is
beautiful and radiant in all his
splendour!

Of you, Most High, he bears the
likeness.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister
Moon and the stars; in the heavens
you have made them, precious and
beautiful.

Be praised, my Lord, through
Brothers Wind and Air, and clouds
and storms, and all the weather,
through which you give your
creatures sustenance.

Be praised, My Lord, through Sister
Water; she is very useful, and
humble, and precious, and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brother
Fire, through whom you brighten the
night. He is beautiful and cheerful,
and powerful and strong.

Be praised, my Lord, through our
sister Mother Earth, who feeds us
and rules us, and produces various
fruits with coloured flowers and
herbs.

Be praised, my Lord, through those
who forgive for love of you; through
those who endure sickness and trial.

Happy those who endure in peace,
for by you, Most High, they will be
crowned.

St. Francis of Assisi

Fifth Reflection

“Dare To Be Different”

"Son of man, you live in the midst of the rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house." Ezekiel 12:2

The emergence of the power of conscious self-awareness was a revolutionary development not alone for the human species, but for all of the other species that inhabit Planet Earth as well. With conscious self-awareness in the human, a new and critical manifestation of creative power and energy was released upon the Earth. Self-awareness in the human changed everything. Now, for the first time in the evolutionary story, a species appeared who had the potential to dominate all other species, and to change the natural rhythms of Earth itself. This power did not accrue to the human all at once, but gradually over a relatively short period of time, at most over a span of about ten thousand years which, in the long history of the Universe, is a mere blink of an eye.

A question that we humans need to put to ourselves during this reflective season of Lent is the simple, direct and sobering question – “How have we humans used the immense power that conscious self-awareness has put at our disposal?”



Through the power of conscious self-awareness:

- We have developed the ability to communicate with one another through language.
- We have developed an ability for philosophy and abstract thought.
- We have given wonderful expression to the creative power in us to generate beauty in all of its forms.
- We have gained much wisdom through the power of intuition.
- We have developed great libraries of scientific knowledge that have enabled us understand and modify our world.
- Through scientific endeavour we have succeeded in articulating the New Story of the Universe.
- We have invented new technologies to manipulate and control the rhythms of nature.
- Through biology and medical research, we have explored the secrets of life itself in the pursuit of understanding and healing.
- We have succeeded in moving out beyond the confines of our own planet to explore the great mystery of outer space.
- We have asked the deeper “why” questions that have initiated our pursuit of the Divine.
- We have opened the human heart to the deep intimacy of mystical experience.



The Shadow Side of Conscious Self-awareness

The power that conscious self-awareness has given us to dominate our environment has not always been used to the benefit of the Earth community. It has cultivated in us a certain arrogance and hubris whereby we have come to regard the Earth and all of the life forms that inhabit it as fodder for human consumption. Because of this all-consuming hubris:

- We have desacralised the Earth to such an extent that we are in danger of forgetting the mysterious Divine Creativity that continues to sustain it.
- We have plundered the Earth's resources so rapaciously that the whole Planet is groaning under the burden of its diminishment.
- We have polluted the Earth's atmosphere, oceans and rivers so profoundly that the natural rhythms of the seasons have been disrupted and the world's climate destabilised.
- We have created a socio-economic environment in which 1.02 billion people do not have enough to eat, where the number of undernourished people in the world increased by 75 million in 2007 and 40 million in 2008.
- We have waged bloody and incessant wars in the name of progress, freedom, and religion.
- We have spent, on average every year for the past ten years, over \$1,000 billion on armaments, at a time when, on average, 1 billion people go to bed hungry each night.
- We have promoted a destructive commercial style of farming that causes a global loss of 25-27 billion tons of topsoil per annum.
- We have disempowered the Earth, curtailing its ability to heal itself.
- We have set in train the sixth major extinction of life in the 4.5 billion year history of the planet. This extinction is unique. It has been initiated by human behaviour.

Endangered Species



Within 50 years this noble animal may well be extinct.

“We could describe our industrial society as a counterproductive, addictive, paralysing, manifestation of a deep culture of pathology.”

Thomas Berry in Dream of the Earth

The Work of Homo “Pollutans”



Reflection

“You have seen many things, but you do not observe them;
Your ears are open, but none hears.”

Isaiah 42:20

During Lent we are encouraged to become reflective, to become aware of what is going on in our own inner world, but also in the wider world of which we are part. It is a time for pondering on how we ourselves have used the power that conscious self-awareness has placed at our disposal. We can participate in the building of a better world by living in conscious self awareness, or we can add to the problem by surrendering to the allurements of a hubris that is both blind and deaf to the cry of the Earth and its community of life, and utterly destructive of the sacred.

Questions for Reflection

How do I align myself with Divine creativity to foster what is sacred and life-giving?

How do I recognise and come to terms with my own hubris?

How do I show my reverence for the Creator by respecting creation?

How do I cherish and nurture the beauty of the Earth and its communities?

What kind of fasting would bring about a more healthy Earth community?

Poem by Drew Dellinger

it's 3:23 in the morning and I'm awake
because my great, great, grandchildren won't let me sleep.
my great, great grandchildren ask me in dreams
what did you do while the planet was plundered?
what did you do when the earth was unravelling?
surely you did something when the seasons started failing
as mammals, reptiles and birds were all dying?
did you fill the streets with protest when democracy was stolen?
what did you do
once
you
knew?

i'm riding home on the coma train
i'm riding home on the coma train
i've got the vice of the milky way in my dreams
i have teams of scientists feeding me data daily
and pleading i immediately turn it into poetry

i want justice-consciousness reached
by people in range of secret frequencies contained in my speech
i am the desirous earth equidistant to the underworld and the flesh of the stars
i am everything already lost
the moment the universe turns transparent and all the light shoots through the
cosmos

i use words to instigate silence
i am a hieroglyphic stairway in a buried Mayan city
suddenly exposed by a hurricane
as satellite circling earth finding dinosaur bones in the gobi desert
i am telescopes that see back in time
i am the precession of the equinoxes
the magnetism of the spiralling sea
i'm riding home on the coma train
with the voice of the milky way in my dreams
i am myths where violets blossom from bloods like dying and rising gods
i'm the boundary of time, soul encountering soul and tongues of fire

it's 3:23 in the morning and i'm awake
because my great, great grandchildren won't let me sleep
my great, great grandchildren ask me in dreams,
what did you do while the earth was unravelling?
i want justice-consciousness reached
by people in range of secret frequencies in my speech.

Poem by Mary Oliver

Have you ever seen
anything
in your life
more wonderful

than the way the sun
every evening,
relaxed and easy,
floats toward the horizon

and into the clouds or the hills,
or the rumpled sea,
and is gone –
and how it slides again
out of blackness,
every morning,
on the other side of the world,
like a red flower

streaming upward on its heavenly oils,
say, on a morning in early summer,
at its perfect imperial distance -
and have you ever felt for anything

such wild love –
do you think there is anywhere, in language,
a word billowing enough
for the pleasure

that fills you,
as the sun
reaches out,
as it warms you
as you stand there,
empty-handed –
or have you too
turned from this world –

or have you too
gone crazy
for power,
for things?

Sixth Reflection

Jesus the Power, Wisdom and Love of God

“In all truth I tell you, no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above”

John 3: 3

The big challenge facing Christianity to-day is one of re-interpretation. The ground of belief has shifted. We need a new kind of awareness to enable us to perceive the centrality of Jesus in the context of the New Story that scientific discovery is revealing. The new cosmology offers us a different understanding of how the world came to be. This new understanding inevitably raises questions about the validity of the answers provided by the cosmological stories that prevailed when all of the great religions, including Christianity, were founded a few millennia ago.

For the past two thousand years, we have lived with an interpretation of the life and death of Jesus that made perfect sense in the context of the Great Cosmology Story out of which the Old Testament was written. The core of that story is captured in the first few chapters of Genesis. Adam and Eve were a special creation of God; they were placed in a position of power and privilege; they disobeyed God's ordinances; they were banished from the Garden of Innocence; the gates of heaven were closed against them. They were condemned to live while on Earth in a state of fearful alienation from God, with the terrible possibility of eternal alienation in the hereafter. They were sustained in their earthly struggle by the promise that a redeemer would come who would win back God's favour for them and open the gates of heaven once again.

The New Cosmology Story, which Divine Wisdom has revealed to us through the discoveries of science, presents a very different picture of how we humans came to be upon the Earth. We are not a special creation unrelated to all of the other species that have appeared over the many eons of Earth's biological history. Our story began with the initial flaring forth of the Universe 13.7 billion years ago. Every tiny atom of our body began its journey to complexity in that explosion of energy and possibility. As living organisms, we are part of the evolutionary story that began with the emergence of bacterial life on Earth almost four billion years ago, and that has now reached the point where we humans have become the self-awareness of the Universe.



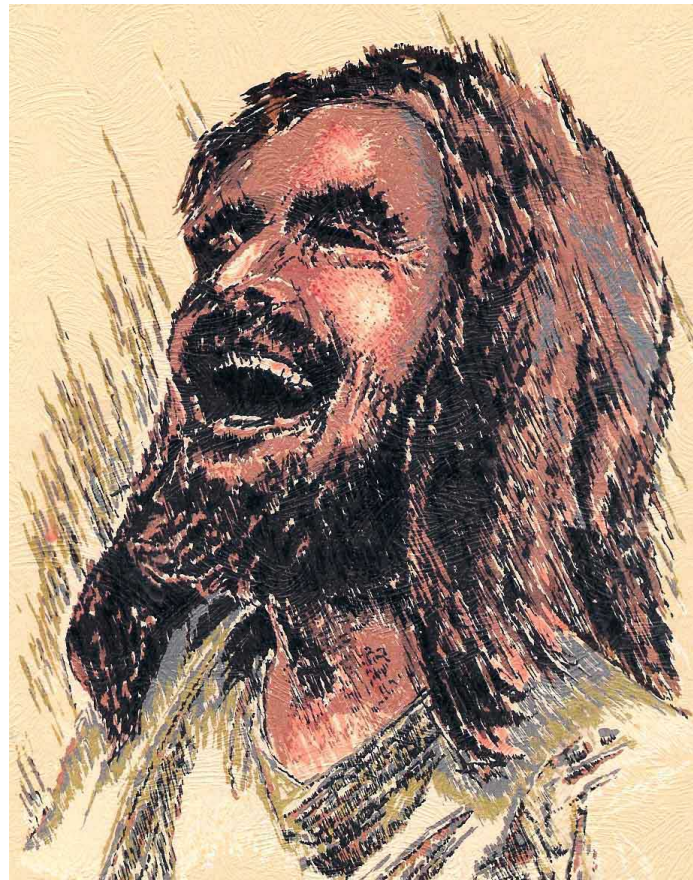
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In each and every segment of that story, the creative power of God is manifested. Each living thing is a unique manifestation of God. God did not “create” the Universe so much as “become” the Universe. God unfurls God’s self like a fern. And we, all of us, are part of that unfolding fern. We humans are all manifestations of the Divine. In fact, everything in creation is a manifestation of the Divine. Within every existing particle the pulse of Divine potentiality vibrates.

Since the Universe Story is the story of the Divine unfolding, it is most appropriate that Jesus should have come upon the earth as a unique expression of this divine unfolding. Jesus was the product of almost four billion years of evolution. He ‘dwelt among us’ in one short period of human history, but his incarnation was 13.7 billion years in the making. He lived in Palestine for some thirty years. His contemporaries had no difficulty whatever in accepting him as a human being like themselves. His followers saw him as a very special person, someone in whom the wisdom, beauty and love of God were manifested in a pre-eminent way. Jesus revealed a new face of God to them. In Jesus, the God of love and mercy took pre-eminence over the biblical God of fear and justice.

Jesus revealed to them a new way to be upon the Earth. He became for them a powerful revelation of the Love and Wisdom of God. Through his way of being

upon the Earth, he demonstrated how to live in conscious self-awareness. He challenged the mores of his time, proclaiming the values of the Reign of God over and against the values of the Reign of Caesar. His life and his preaching were regarded as subversive by the power brokers of his day.



He was executed by an alliance of political and religious interests who deemed it advantageous to silence him. It was expedient, they argued, that one man should die for all of the people.

Jesus never claimed that his death was necessary to open the gates of heaven. He never claimed that His God had to be appeased by the bloody immolation of his own life. He preached by example the importance of living life with integrity. He died believing that love overcomes everything, and that we humans can only live authentically when we learn to love passionately, totally, inclusively and unconditionally. This was the meaning of his life. This was the recipe of salvation that he offered, and continues to offer, to people weary of life lived at a superficial level.

What the world needs to-day is:

- A spirituality that brings meaning to life with all of its struggles and uncertainties.
- A new understanding of what it means to be free
- A deliverance from the tyranny of fear
- A release from the imprisonment of hatred and hostility
- An understanding and acceptance of our status as the conscious self-awareness of the Universe
- A vibrant sense of the sacred that will empower us to respect all of creation, and to live in harmony with all of life
- A new generosity of heart that challenges our greed, and opens our hearts to the call of the poor and the needy
- The strength to oppose what is destructive of the Planet and its precious colonies of life.
- A new awareness of the centrality of love to all of life.

What kind of salvation does Jesus offer to this weary world?

In his book, *The Heart of Christianity*, Marcus Borg described Jesus as being:

- a) A Jewish Mystic
- b) A Wisdom Teacher
- c) A Healer
- d) A Social Prophet
- e) A Movement Initiator

In short, Jesus was one in whom Divine Presence was so clearly manifested that people began to ask “what manner of man is this”. Taking all of these factors together, it is clear that Jesus pioneered a new way of being upon the Earth:

- a new way of being with Divine Mystery
- a new way of being with others
- a new way of being with one’s self
- a new way of reverencing all of creation

Jesus lived this new way of being with absolute integrity. He remained steadfast in it despite rejection, abandonment, torture and death.

And here is the great mystery of his life. At the moment of his death, a moment of utter rejection and abandonment, at that point of intersection between two worlds, Divine Energy surged through his being, unveiling him as The Christ, the anointed of

God. This was the Divine endorsement of all that he preached and all that he promised to his disciples. In the years immediately following his death, Jesus' disciples came to be known as followers of the Way – the Jesus Way of being in the world.

In order to live this New Way of being, it is necessary be born again, to enter into a new kind of awareness of what living in harmony with Divine Mystery means. Through this new awareness, we become a new creation. Becoming a new creation is not alien to us. There is in each one of us a Divine gene, a capacity for greatness, a capacity to be transformed into Divine Mystery itself, to be “filled with the utter fullness of God” Eph 3:19.



Questions for Reflection

What inspiration do I draw from “the Way of Jesus”?

How is the Way of Jesus relevant to our world?

What aspect of the life of Jesus speaks to me most clearly?

What image of Divine Mystery does Jesus awaken in me?

How can Jesus be a source of healing for people and for the Planet itself?

Praying a New Story

We believe in a sustaining, life-giving Presence
active in our universe for all the billions of years
since the first moment of its existence.

Working within and with what was there,
this Presence came to visible expression
in the formation of stars
and galaxies
and planets,
rocks and gasses,
water and soil,
living things
and ourselves as life-form
with conscious awareness and appreciation
of this Presence.

We marvel at life,
not knowing where and how it started
nor when and how it reached this planet.
We celebrate ourselves as a life-form giving
the Source of all that is
unique expression
in our awareness,
in our intelligence,
and in our ability to communicate.

In us, this Source can sing and dance,
write and speak,
love and create, hold and nurture.

We give flesh and bone,
visible expression,
to this ultimate Mystery.
We are earthen vessels that hold a treasure,
“works of art,”
“temples” of the Spirit of Life.

Through human history,
men and women have given wonderful expression to
this Spirit
as they offered insights about human existence
and our connectedness
with the Source of all that exists.

Jesus is *the* story we gather around
and give thanks for.
Human like us
he discerned where the Source is found:
in human interaction,
in feeding,
in caring,
in clothing,
in visiting,
in sharing,
in forgiving,
in being neighbour.

He urged people
to work together to establish
the “reign of God”
by wholehearted generosity,
by eliminating boundaries between people,
and by working for peace and justice,
in all human endeavours.

We remember his total commitment
to living fully and loving totally
and his faith in a God to be trusted
whatever twists life could take in this imperfect world.

Confronted with failure, abandonment, and a humiliating death
Jesus remained faithful to his belief
in a constant and eternal connectedness

between human living and loving
and the Source of all existence.
He died in that belief,
and in a way we do not understand,
yet one day hope to share in.
He died *into* that Source,
into the Spirit that had come to visibility in him.
We give our "AMEN" to his belief
that when we live in love
we live in God and God lives in us.

Michael Morwood

Postscript

And some time make the time to drive out west
Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore,
In September or October when the wind
And the light are working off each other
So that the ocean on one side is wild
With foam and glitter, and inland among the stones
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit
By the earthed lightening of a flock of swans,
Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,
Their fully grown headstrong-looking heads
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.
Useless to think you'll park and capture it
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,
A hurry through which known and strange things pass
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.

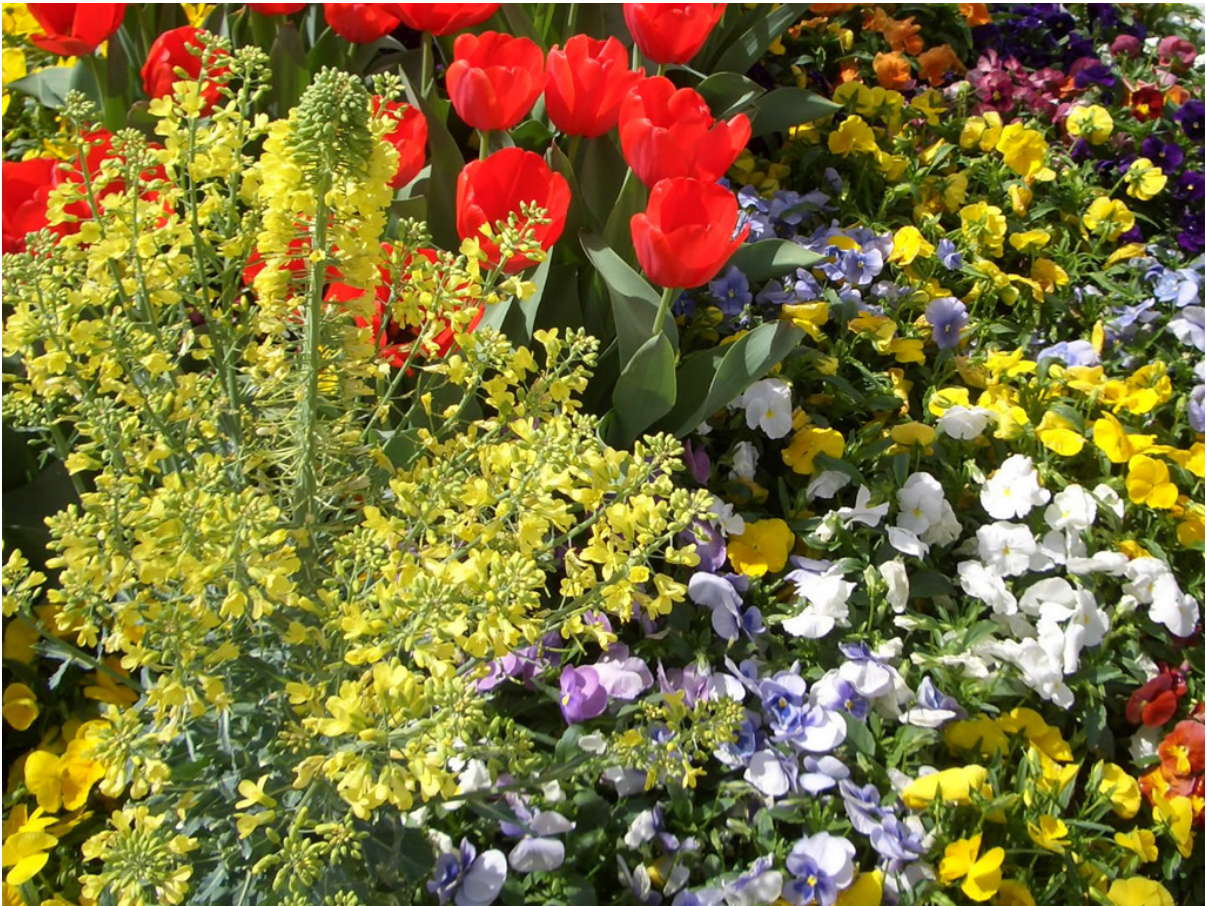
Seamus Heaney

Easter Sunday



Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here; he has risen.” Luke 24:6

The Miracle of Spring



An Easter Metaphor

Creator of springtime, how can it be that every year I forget the miracles visiting the land in the form of fresh leaves, laughing flowers, greening grass.

Winter holds a strong power over me. I lose the memory of vibrant vigour, the unseen energy raising dead earthen things to awakening life.

Risen One, dwelling within me, how can it be that I forget you, your passionate grace tending my soul, your constant stream of hope rising up through the dead ground of my brown, barren prayer.

I turn to you in this season of spring, bowing gratefully to every growing plant, every flourishing flower, for each one sings an Easter metaphor full of memory, proclaiming your wild embrace of my inner life, a life holding the promise of an eternal spring.

Joyce Rupp