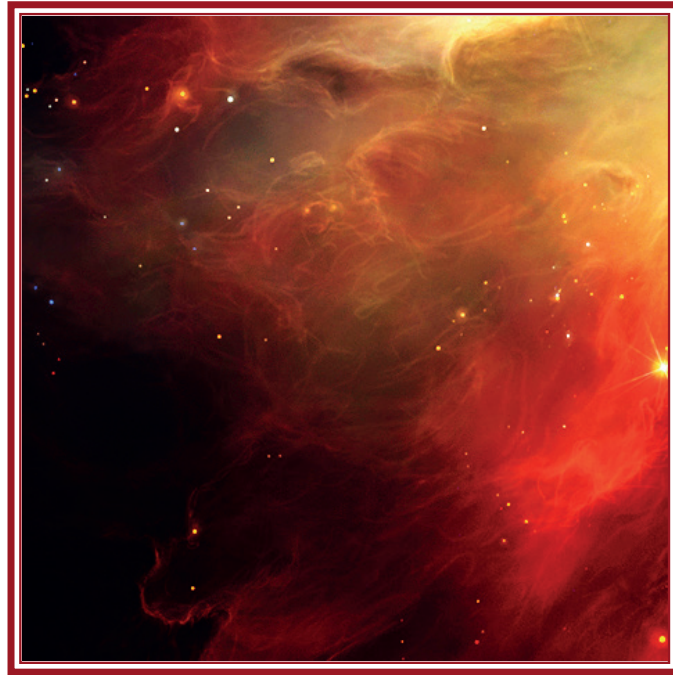




The Unfolding Story of the Universe



Prayer One



■ HYMN

TOUCH THE EARTH

Kathy Sherman

Touch the Earth with gentleness,
touch the earth with love.

Touch her with a future, by the way you live today.
God has given us the power to create the world anew
if we touch the Earth together me and you.

The time is here, the time is now, we can change things.
Give the earth your dream for harmony she is waiting,
waiting for love, waiting for you, waiting for me.

Show the Earth you care about her future.
Melt the walls of hate and fear that keep us apart.
Believe we can live together as friends of the Earth.

So be the reason, be the hope for others to believe
that the Earth is meant for beauty, goodness and peace
and that our God of love is God of the Earth's one family.

■ *Pause for a moment to be still and aware of
God's presence among us and in creation*

■ READING

BROTHERS WILL BE INSPIRED by and embody the new story of the Universe, a new understanding of Jesus and the example of Edmund Rice.

OWITF, Proposition, Art. 3

The New Universe Story is the story of evolution of the entire universe starting some 13.7 billion years ago. This story suggests that all life, including human life, comes from the same source.

PRAYING IN A NEW TIME

So all creation is part of a single community of life and is interconnected in profound ways. Within that community, humans have evolved a unique consciousness which enables them to respond to the needs of the whole of creation. For Christians, this action is the Spirit of God working from within creation and bringing about ever more complex life.

The Universe Story allows a glimpse of the evolutionary process of which every one is a part. It opens up the possibility of a new consciousness about what it means to be human within a cosmic community. Thomas Berry describes this as the “Great Work” for humanity and a particular vocation for Religious Sisters and Brothers.

OWITF Proposition and Validations

- *Pause for a moment to reflect and share on the Reading*

■ PSALM 8

How great is your name O God,
in all the earth!
You whose glory above the heavens
is chanted on the lips of babes,
have founded a defence against your foes,
to silence the cries of the rebels.

When I look at the heavens, the work of your hands,
the moon and the stars which you established;
who are we that you should keep us in mind,
mortal flesh that you care for us?

Yet you have made us little less than God,
and crowned us with glory and honour.
You entrust us with the works of your hands,

to care for all your creation.

All sheep and oxen,
and even the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the sea.

How great is your name, Creator God,
in all the earth!

■ SCRIPTURE

Is 48, 6-7

YOU HAVE HEARD THESE THINGS; look at them all. Will you not admit them? From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you. They are created now, and not long ago; you have not heard of them before today. So you cannot say, “Yes, I knew of them”.

PRAYER

Glory be to you
Great Creating Spirit
who shines in distant stars beyond numbering.
And on earth peace.

Glory be to you
Great Creating Spirit
who sings and wings in birds on high.
And on earth peace.

Glory be to you
Great Creating Spirit
whose thunder shakes the shining firmament.
And on earth peace.

PRAYING IN A NEW TIME

Glory glory glory
and on earth peace.

AMEN

Praying with the Earth, John Philip Newell

or alternative prayer

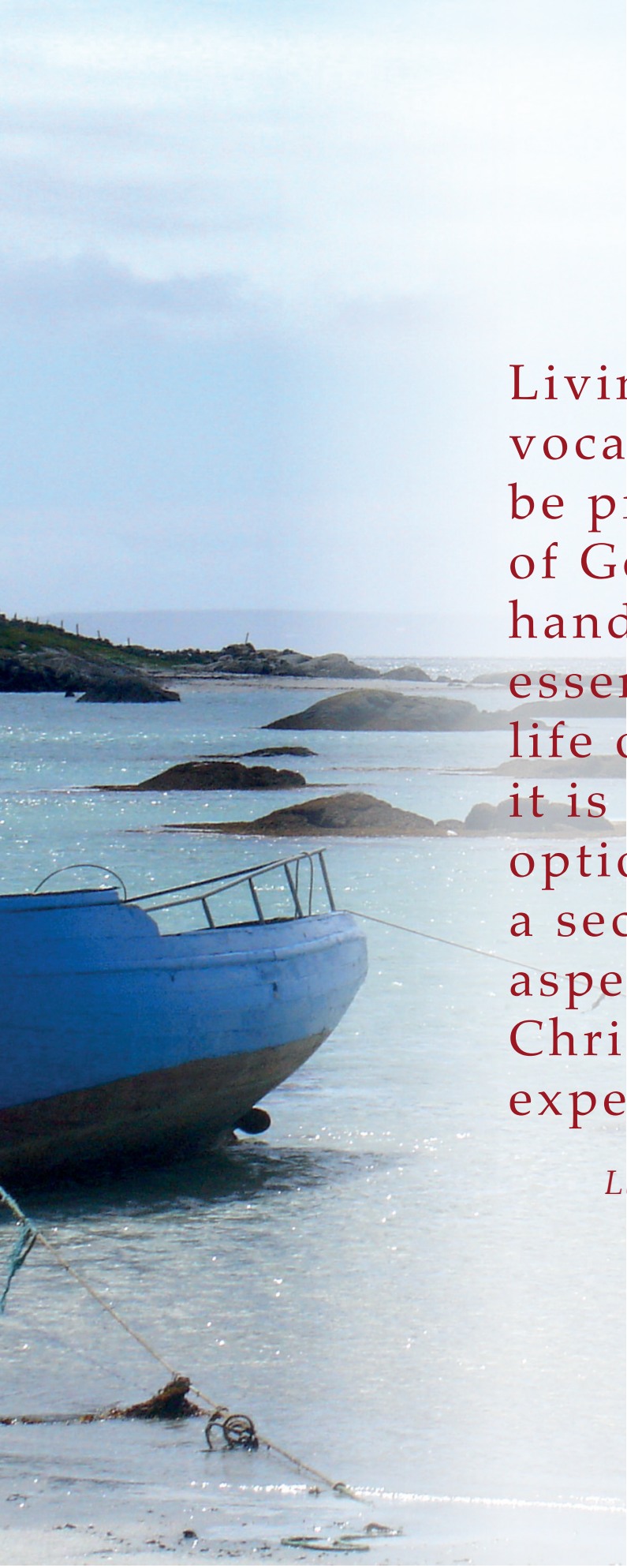
Your beauty and goodness , O Immanent One,
requires earth's diversity and our own wildness,
breaking down, and out of, the monotony of
prescribed patterns, choosing rather to take our
place in the dancing procession of differentness,
the variegated life of Christ finding expression
in this body of the church and the bodies of our
kin-creatures.

Make a harvest, O Holy One, of our quirkiness,
that we might be your radiant presence.

AMEN

If Darwin Prayed, Bruce Sanguin



A photograph of a blue boat moored in a harbor. The boat is in the lower-left foreground, with its bow and part of its side visible. It is tied to a rope that extends across the water. The water is a light blue-grey color, reflecting the sky. In the background, there are several dark, rocky islands or headlands. The sky is a pale blue with soft, white clouds. The overall mood is calm and serene.

Living our
vocation to
be protectors
of God's
handiwork is
essential to a
life of virtue;
it is not an
optional or
a secondary
aspect of our
Christian
experience.

Laudato Si, par. 217



The Unfolding Story of the Universe



Prayer Two



■ HYMN

THIS ANCIENT LOVE

Caroline McDade

Long before the night was born from darkness,
Long before the dawn rolled unsteady from fire,
Long before She wrapped her scarlet arm around the hills,
there was a love, this ancient love was born.

Long before the grass spotted green the bare hillside,
Long before a wing unfolded to wind,
Long before She wrapped her long blue arm around the sea,
there was a love, this ancient love was born.

Long before a chain was forged from the hillside,
Long before a voice uttered freedom's cry,
Long before She wrapped her bleeding arms around a child,
there was a love, this ancient love was born.

Long before the name of a God was spoken,
Long before a cross was nailed from a tree,
Long before She laid her arm of colours 'cross the sky,
there was a love, this ancient love was born.

Wakeful our night, slumbers our morning,
Stubborn the grass sowing green wounded hill,
As we wrap our healing arms to hold what her arms held,
this ancient love, this aching love rolls on.

- *Pause for a moment to be still and aware of
God's presence among us and in creation*

■ READING

REVELATION IS ON-GOING. God speaks as loudly to-day through the wonders of creation as God ever spoke in the past. To deny the on-going nature of revelation is to deny in some way the story

of the Universe and the way in which the Divine Presence continues to manifest in it and through it.

Revelation arises out of an experience of the Divine. If there is no experience of the Divine, there can be no revelation. Revelation like prophesy is on going. It is a denial of the fundamental belief that God is revealed in and through creation to suggest that revelation ceased two thousand years ago, and that all we have been doing ever since is living off of past experiences of God. As Gabriel Moran has succinctly put it:

“A prophet does not tell people revelations; instead he awakens the revelatory character of their own lives. Revelation is not what prophets have, it is what communities experience. Far from being isolated from community, the prophet is the one most deeply in touch with the roots of the community’s life. Like the artist he will not conveniently fit into the ordinary framework of the community. He will be strongly opposed by part of the community. This is the test of true prophets who persist in trying to awaken the whole community to its undreamt of possibilities. The only final test of the prophet is whether he does eventually succeed, that is, whether his words and actions resonate in the experience of humankind.”

OWITF Publication, Anthony M. McDonnell

■ *Pause for a moment to reflect and share
on the Reading*

■ PSALM 19

The heavens tell of your glory, O God,
and the firmament proclaims your handiwork.
Day unto day pours forth the story
and night unto night reveals its knowledge.

No speech, no word, no voice is heard;—
yet their voice goes out to all the earth,
their words to the end of the world.

In them you set a tent for the sun;
it comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
rejoices like a champion running its course.

Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its course to the end of them;
there is nothing concealed from its heat.

Your law, O God, is perfect,
reviving the soul.
Your testimony is to be trusted,
making the simple wise.

Your precepts are right,
rejoicing the heart.
Your command is pure,
giving light to the eyes.

The fear of God is holy,
enduring forever.
God's ordinances are true,
and all of them just.

More to be desired are they than gold,
more than the purest gold,
and sweeter are they than honey,
than drippings from the comb.

■ SCRIPTURE

Jn 15, 26


WHEN THE ADVOCATE COMES, whom I will send to you from the Father – the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father – he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

PRAYER

Blessings on the day
born of night.
Blessings on the earth
wedded to heaven.
Blessings on the creatures
adored by angels.
Blessings on our bodies
alive with spirit.
Blessings on our minds
filled with dreams.
Blessings on our hearts
opened by love.
Blessings, blessings, blessings.
AMEN

Praying with the Earth, John Philip Newell





If present
trends
continue, this
century may
well witness
extraordinary
climate
change and an
unprecedented
destruction of
ecosystems,
with serious
consequences
for all of us.

Laudato Si, par. 24



The Unfolding Story of the Universe



Prayer Three



■ HYMN

THIS ONE STORY

Kathy Sherman

In this one story is all our stories,
full of promise and possibility.
In this one story, that we are learning,
is hope for finding our true identity.

So listen well and open up your hearts.
It's time for us to make a brand new start.
Earth is waiting to see what humans will choose.
Earth is waiting to see what humans will choose.

■ *Pause for a moment to be still and aware of
God's presence among us and in creation*

■ READING

I HAVE READ QUITE A BIT about the Universe Story, and it challenges my understandings of our traditional expressions of Catholic faith – new consciousness of creation itself, questions around Original Sin and Redemption, Jesus as ‘Saviour’, being some of them. At the moment, there appears a hesitation on the part of the hierarchical Church to look more deeply at these issues. It seems to be often the case that many in the Church are living new realities before they are finally recognized by the hierarchy. A faithfulness to the exploration, to genuine study and conversation and to a reverent listening to views all seem to be part of what I need to do.

Jesus, as a human person, grew in relationship to the Mystery we call God in his time. Everything around him led him to a deeper awareness of that Mystery whom he related to as Father. I want to learn from Jesus about his growth in the Mystery, and to grow more deeply in that relationship. I find I relate much more to the human Jesus, rather than put more energy into worshipping a divine Jesus. At a time when there are so many parts

of the world where basic human rights are violated, the humanity of Jesus with his challenges to systems of power, his healing and compassion, and his attention to the poorest, is the essence of how we have to relate to one another.

That said, I think that the image of the 'Cosmic Christ' is crucial for us too, and it will be important for us to keep studying and dialoguing to understand this cosmic dimension. I think that we can easily by-pass the hard study and reflection that the Universe Story is requiring of us, because it is not simple, and yet new insights are emerging into seeing Christ as part of the bigger story which are exciting and a better expression of traditional belief for these days. It's an on-going exploration that we have to be part of with some energy.

OWITF publication, Peter Dowling

- *Pause for a moment to reflect and share on the Reading*

■ PSALM 24

Yours is the earth and its fullness,
the world and all who dwell there;
for you have founded it upon the seas,
and established it upon the rivers.

Who shall climb your mountain, O God?
Who shall stand in your holy place?
Those with clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not desire what is vain,
who have not sworn so as to deceive their neighbours.

They shall receive blessings from the Most High,
and reward from the God who saves them.
Such are those who seek after the Holy One;

who seek the face of the God of their ancestors.
O gates, lift up your heads;
grow higher, ancient doors.
Let enter the God of glory!

Who is this God of glory?
The One who is mighty and valiant,
valiant against all injustice.

O gates, lift up your heads;
grow higher, ancient doors.

Let enter the God of glory!
Who is this God of glory?

■ SCRIPTURE

Is 65,17-18

SEE, I WILL CREATE NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.'

PRAYER

May the mighty angels of Heaven
guard the four corners of earth this night.
May the mighty messengers of Life
hold in balance the sacred elements of the universe.

May the mighty bearers of Presence
safeguard the direction of our hearts this night

PRAYING IN A NEW TIME

that we may sleep in peace,
that we may dream of justice,
that we may wake to the world's oneness,
that we may wake to the world's newborn oneness.
AMEN.

Praying with the Earth, John Philip Newell





We lack an
awareness of
our common
origin, of
our mutual
belonging, and
of a future to
be shared with
everyone.

Laudato Si, par. 202



The Unfolding Story of the Universe



Prayer Four



■ HYMN

THE DEER'S CRY

Shaun Davey

I arise today through the strength of heaven,
Light of sun, radiance of moon,
Splendor of fire, speed of lightning,
Swiftness of wind, depth of the sea,
Stability of earth, firmness of rock.

I arise today through God's strength to pilot me.
God's eye to look before me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's way to lie before me,
God's shield to protect me,
From all who shall wish me ill,
Afar and a-near,
Alone and in a multitude,
Against every cruel, merciless power,
That may oppose my body and soul.

Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ in me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise, Christ to shield me,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me.
I arise today.

■ READING

ONE OF THE KEY GOALS of the 2008 Congregation Chapter was to sensitize the brothers to issues around the environment, the universe story, a larger view of the world around us and our place in it and a consequent different view of God in relation to this

universe. This is a huge agenda and it is no surprise that it is an on-going one. In many ways it is an attempt to shift the spiritual view of the brothers from a very intellectual view of God and the universe to a more mystical vision. The central mystical vision within and beyond Christianity has always been that all is one and that all leads to God. The more we learn about the universe around us, the more this vision becomes clear.

St. Francis of Assisi is often referred to as the patron saint of ecology and not without reason. While many might say his spiritual insight and charism centred on poverty, this is not accurate.

Francis had a passion for evangelical poverty but only as a means. He saw a world tied down by material things and in need of freedom. Poverty was the means he saw to attain this freedom. By being freed from material bondage, people were now open to see God where God dwelled, i.e. everywhere. Francis was able to see God in nature where it is easy and in lepers where it is hard.

Francis was so conscious of the all-present God that he identified as personally as he could with God, which is one explanation for the phenomenon of the stigmata. Francis did not only see God but was trying to identify with God and express his love for God as much as he could. It was during a vision of the crucified Jesus within the six-winged fiery seraph that Francis received the wounds.

Relationship with the Earth community has its greatest meaning when it is rooted in a quest for the mystical vision of the Creator of that universe. The Earth awareness movement as a foundational principle of Our Way into the Future, like all such principles, must lead us to God.'

OWITF Publication, Michael Colasuonno

■ PSALM 29

O give to God, you heavenly beings,
give to God glory and power;
give glory to God's holy name.
Worship your God in holy array.

For God's voice is heard on the waters,
thundering on many waters;
the voice of God is powerful,
God's voice, full of splendour.

Your voice shatters the cedars,
it shatters the cedars of Lebanon;
you make Lebanon skip like a calf
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

Your voice, O God, flashes flames of fire.
Your voice shakes the wilderness of Kadesh;
it makes the oak trees whirl,
and strips the forests bare.

The God of glory thunders!
In your temple all cry: "Glory!"

You sit enthroned over the flood;
you sit, our sovereign forever.
May you give strength to your people,
and bless your people with peace.

■ SCRIPTURE

Rm 8: 22-23

WE KNOW THAT THE WHOLE CREATION has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but

PRAYING IN A NEW TIME

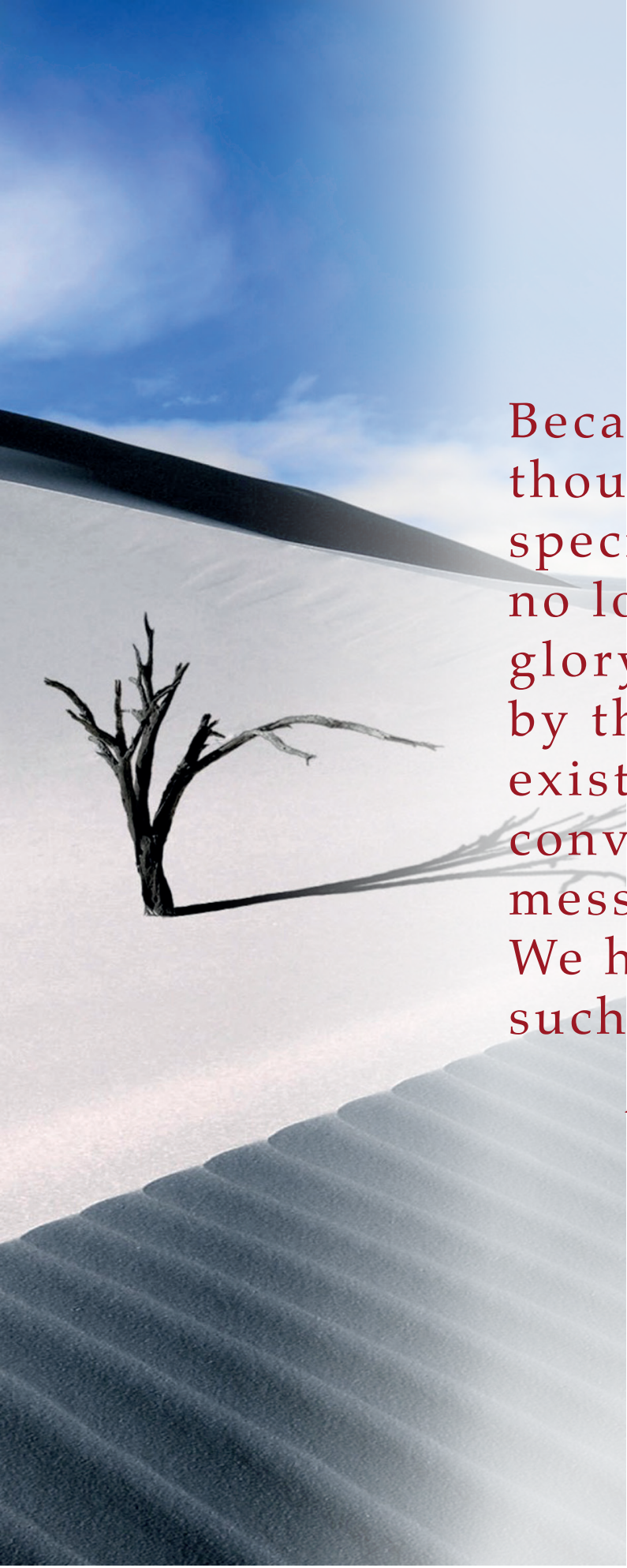
we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

PRAYER

May we love the earth
and cherish her fecundity.
May we love the rivers
and obey their ancient purity.
May we love the skies
and honour their infinity
all for one another.
AMEN.

Praying with the Earth, John Philip Newell



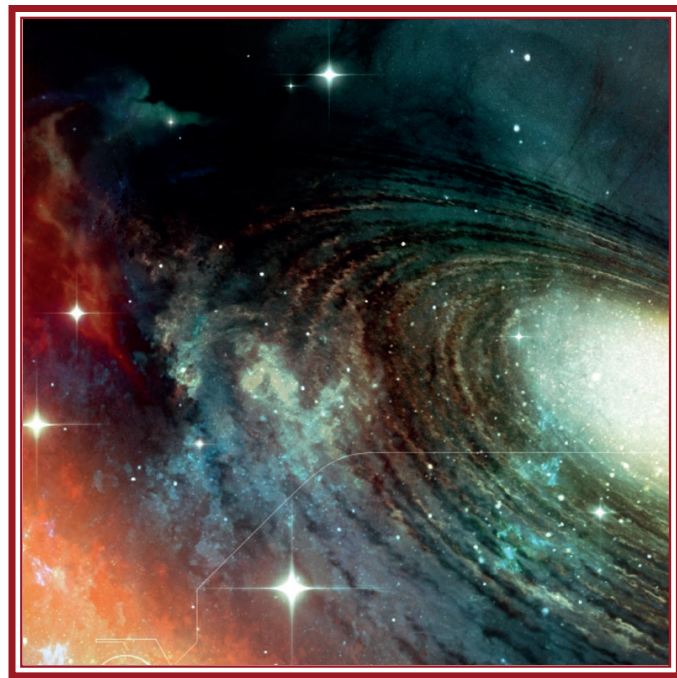


Because of us,
thousands of
species will
no longer give
glory to God
by their very
existence, nor
convey their
message to us.
We have no
such right.

Laudato Si, par. 33



The Unfolding Story of the Universe



Prayer Five



■ HYMN

BROTHER SUN AND SISTER MOON

John Michael Talbot

Brother Sun, and Sister Moon,
Sister Star shine day and night,
see them shine, beautiful,
radiant splendour of light.

Brother Sun, and Sister Moon,
heaven and earth, proclaim God's glory,
all praise be Yours, most High God.

Brother Wind, and Brother Air,
fair and storm, all weather's moods,
coloured flowers and healing herbs
heavenly grace flows through you.

Brother Sun, and Sister Moon,
heaven and earth, proclaim God's glory,
all praise be Yours most High God.

So rejoice,
for the heavens and earth
are full of God's glory.

Brother Sun, Sister Moon.

■ *Pause for a moment to be still and aware of
God's presence among us and in creation*

■ READING

THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT is slipping away. At the current rate of destruction, tropical rainforests could be gone within as little as forty years. The seas are being overfished to the point of exhaustion, and coral reefs are dying from ocean acidification. Biologists

PRAYING IN A NEW TIME

say that we are currently at the start of the largest mass extinction event since the disappearance of the dinosaurs. As greenhouse gases increasingly accumulate in the atmosphere, temperatures are likely to rise faster than our current ecological and agricultural systems can adapt.

It is no secret that the Earth is in trouble and that we humans are to blame. Just knowing these grim facts, however, won't get us very far. We have to transform this knowledge into a deep passion to change course. But passion does not come primarily from the head; it is a product of the heart. And the heart is not aroused by the bare facts alone. It needs stories that weave those facts into a moving and meaningful narrative.

We need a powerful new story that we are a part of nature and not separate from it. We need a story that properly situates humans in the world—neither above it by virtue of our superior intellect, nor dwarfed by the universe into cosmic insignificance. We are equal partners with all that exists, co-creators with trees and galaxies and the microorganisms in our own gut, in a materially and spiritually evolving universe.

This was the breathtaking vision of the late Father Thomas Berry. Berry taught that humanity is presently at a critical decision point. Either we develop a more heart-full relationship with the Earth that sustains us, or we destroy ourselves and life on the planet.

Together, With Earth, Spring 2015, YES! Magazine, Richard Schiffman

■ *Pause for a moment to reflect and share
on the Reading*

■ CANTICLE

Dan 3: 57-73

All you works of God, praise our God.
Praise and exalt God above all forever.
All you angels, sing God's praise,
you heavens and waters above.

Sun and moon, and stars of heaven,
sing praise with the heavenly hosts.

Every shower and dew, praise our God.
Give praise all you winds.
Praise our God, you fire and heat,
cold and chill—dew and rain.

Frost and chill, praise our God.
Praise God, ice and snow.
Nights and days, sing hymns of praise,
light and darkness,
lightnings and clouds.

Let all the earth bless our God.
Praise and exalt God above all forever.
Let all that grows from the earth give praise
together with mountains and hills.

Give praise you springs,
you seas and rivers,
dolphins and all water creatures.
Let birds of the air, beasts wild and tame,
together with all living peoples,
praise and exalt God above all forever.

■ SCRIPTURE

Acts 10: 9-16

ABOUT NOON THE FOLLOWING DAY as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice

PRAYING IN A NEW TIME

told him, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat'. 'Surely not, Lord!' Peter replied. 'I have never eaten anything impure or unclean'. The voice spoke to him a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean'. This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

PRAYER

O Holy One, we confess that we suffer from tunnel vision. We find ways to narrow our focus and fixate on facsimiles of the life you offer, rather than embrace the real thing.


Too often we confuse traditionalism for tradition, theology for direct knowing, and dogma for the divine. Drop sheets of sacred possibility from the heavens, blanket our consciousness with unimagined possibility.

Help us to dream, with Peter, of wide-open hearts and minds, of bridges that span cultural divides, of a world liberated for love – one that is coming into being through us and all those who have learned the dream language of the soul.

AMEN.

If Darwin Prayed, Bruce Sanguin





Because all
creatures are
connected,
each must
be cherished
with love and
respect, for all
of us as living
creatures are
dependent on
one another.

Laudato Si, par. 42