SEDOS
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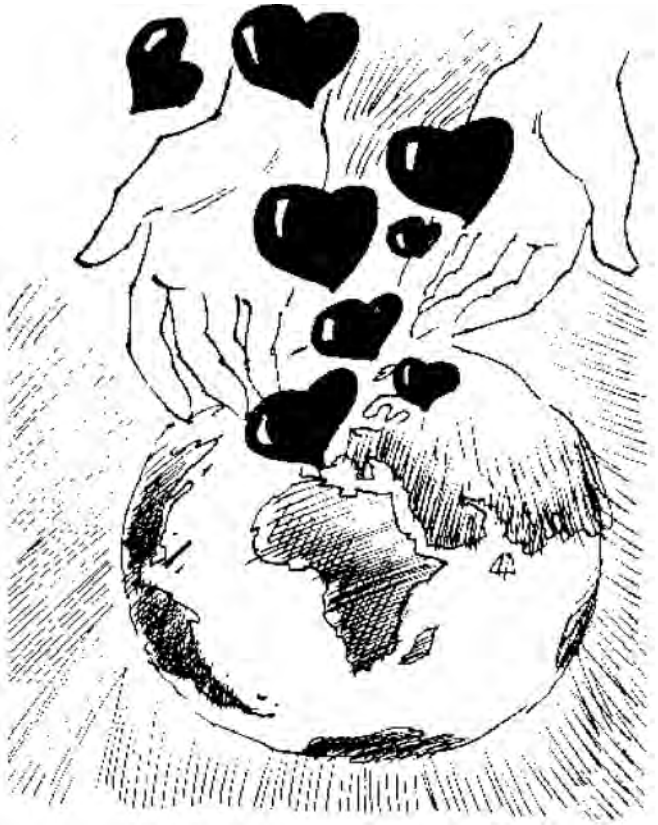
"CREATION AT THE HEART OF MISSION"



SEDOS - JPIC JOINT RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR

ASSISI 2009

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Servizio di Documentazione e Studi
Documentation and Research Centre
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SEDOS
"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me - He has appointed me to bring good news to the poor - to proclaim liberty to the captives and new sight to the blind - to free the oppressed and announce the Lord's year of mercy" (Lc 4, 18s)
Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission

In the beginning, when God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth had no form and was void; darkness was over the deep and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters (Gn 1:1-2).
... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good (1:31).

Our traditional way of looking at man in relationship to the created world has been that of seeing man as the supreme being of Creation. Man, even in our religious tradition, has been made the master of the universe, master of all things that have been created. Thus, the idea of reflecting upon man as being just a minute part of the whole Creation, a speck among the billions of creatures, united and interdependent with them, seems a little bit far-fetched. To place the care of Creation at the heart of our Christian mission seems to stretch the idea of mission beyond the normal boundaries of traditional thinking, thus risking the danger of falling into the extreme views of activism or of dancing to the tune of the fashionable ideologies of the day.

Yet, looking at the whole of Creation as the manifestation of the love of God is part of mission. Creation is the continuous work of the Spirit 'hovering' over and 'breathing' life into the universe for billions of years. The whole universe and the marvellous interdependency of all creatures sing of the love of the Creator. Creation is the supreme manifestation of the essence of God, sharing Himself in a continuous life-giving act of love. And 'all that he had made was so good' that God sent His Son Jesus to be incarnated as a creature. God sent His Son to help us discover that the whole Creation is full of the Spirit of God. The Incarnation of Jesus brings to fulfilment the whole plan and process of Creation, revealing how God shares His love with all creatures since all eternity.

During the month of May, SEDOS and the JPIC Commission of the UISG/USG teamed up to offer religious men and women, from all over the world, the opportunity to reflect upon Creation from the prism of mission. Two hundred and thirty-one brothers and sisters accepted the challenge and spent five days in Assisi praying and sharing their insights and experiences, trying to discover how God reveals Himself in every particle of our living universe.

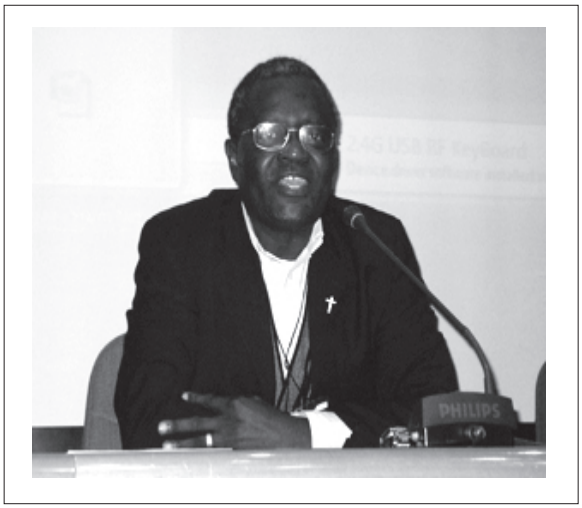
Led by **Séan McDonagh, SSC,** and **Denis Edwards**, our religious Brothers and Sisters walked through new paths of wonder, respect, repentance and love towards our 'Brother Sun and Sister Moon'. **Séan** began telling the *Story of the Universe: Our Story*. We could travel through the billions of years of history of a marvellous masterpiece and realize our lack of appreciation for it. **Denis** first guided the group to consider the *Ecological Commitment and the Following of Jesus*; then the relationship and implication of *Eucharist and Ecology*; so as to conclude with the *Final Fulfilment: The Deification of Creation*.

... God saw all that he had made, and it was very good (Gen 1,31).

Fr Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP
SEDOS Executive Director

Ouverture du Séminaire à Assise de mai 2009

Chers frères et sœurs,



Vous tous membres de SEDOS, vous tous venus pour le Séminaire de Sedos de cette année, au nom du Comité Exécutif de SEDOS, au nom du comité Justice et Paix, Intégrité de la création de USG/ UISG, et en mon nom personnel, je vous souhaite la bienvenue. Bienvenu tout spécial à ceux (et celles) qui participent pour la toute première fois à une rencontre de SEDOS.

J'espère que vous avez tous fait un bon voyage. Comme vous voyez et comme vous le saviez d'ailleurs, cette année, nous avons quitté notre lieu habituel de rencontre 'Ariccia' pour Assisi.

Nous voulons cette année nous concentrer sur notre participation et notre rôle, comme membres de l'Église et comme missionnaires à un sujet dont on parle de plus en plus et qui presse, un sujet pour lequel, beaucoup d'entre nous sont déjà engagés, un sujet pour lequel nous ne pouvons pas rester indifférents au risque de devenir un peu complices : la Justice, la Paix et l'Intégrité de la Création. Cette terre que Dieu nous a donnée, cette terre dont Dieu nous a donné la responsabilité, en prenons-nous soin vraiment ?

Comme missionnaires, nous faisons partie de ce monde ; comme missionnaires, il n'y a rien que nous faisons qui ne nous mette en contact avec ce qui nous entoure et que Dieu a créé et pour employer les mots célèbres de Saint François d'Assise : « Frère le Soleil, Sœur Lune et les Étoiles, Frère le Vent, L'eau, il l'appelle Sœur, le feu, il l'appelle Frère, la terre il l'appelle Mère et pour toutes ces créatures, il loue le Seigneur.

Lui qui magnifiait la création, nous prions pour qu'il nous accompagne dans nos réflexions et dans nos partages.

J'espère que nous allons tous ensemble collaborer pour que notre Séminaire nous donne un peu plus de lumière et d'encouragement pour nous engager un peu plus à refaire de ce monde et de « Mère Terre », un lieu où il fait beau et bon de vivre. Nous inspirant des expériences des uns et des autres, n'ayons pas peur de nous engager là où nous sommes pour un peu plus de justice, de paix et pour sauvegarder ce don précieux que Dieu a mis à notre disposition et qu'il a vu beau, après l'avoir crée. En effet, Dieu vit que cela était beau. Puissions-nous, nous aussi continuer à garder cette terre belle et faire d'elle un lieu où il fait beau de vivre.

Je compte sur vous tous et sur chacun d'entre vous pour la réussite de notre Séminaire de cette année.

Je vous souhaite un très bon Séminaire et mettons-nous au travail.

Père Edouard Tsimba, CICM
Président de SEDOS

Some Photos .....

Seán McDonagh, SSC

The Story of the Universe: Our Story

A sense of identity is a major problem for our young people. Questions arise such as: Who am I? Where am I going? Where am I in relation to my family? What is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of human dignity, love and community? Have I an important, unique role to play. The New Story as told by Berry will offer some answers to these vital questions. The New Story assures us that each person makes a unique contribution to the universe by the development and creative use of his/her gifts and talents.

One of the problems with our present culture is that the fundamental story, which gives meaning to individual human life, is not accepted by society at large any more. The Creation story in Genesis Chapter 1, tells how the world was made in seven consecutive (Gn 1:2-4a) days. The chapter tells how humankind arrived on the scene (Gn 1:26-31). This account of how our world came to be is no longer adequate or effective in the light of modern science.

We need a modern comprehensive myth or story to account for the emergence of the world and our place and role in it. The New Story that has been developed by Berry in the light of modern scientific knowledge has provided us with a credible and acceptable story. This story is the context within which all other stories of origin find their fulfilment. The Genesis account elaborates a religious and moral view, it does not give us a historical or scientific account of the origins of the universe, planet Earth or our own unique habitat.

At the beginning of the 21st century we are beginning to see the Earth in its context of the Universe. Because of space travel, we have been able to stand apart from the Earth and see it, at least in photographs, as a whole. We have become used to a new picture of the Earth, as a single, beautiful, blue-green planet shared by all living creatures. This new understanding of the formation of our universe and our earth must now become the largest possible context for our global, national and individual lives. It must become the foundation of all meaning. This story or myth attempts to answer the ultimate questions which humankind has always posed and wrestled with since *Homo sapiens* emerged on the planet. From where do we come? Where are we now? What are we to do? How are we to live our lives today? What is our destiny? What does the future hold for us?

This is the context in which we must view the work of Thomas Berry. He is an American Passionist Priest, a theologian or geologian, as he prefers to call himself. Building on the work of Teilhard de Chardin he helped to articulate a more comprehensive story of Creation. In both, *The Dream of the Earth*, and, *The Universe Story* (which he wrote with the scientist Brian Swimme) he uses insights of astronomers, physicists, biologists, cultural anthropologists, historians and religious scholars like Mircea Eliade to tell of the emergent Universe. In these books he charts out the extraordinary unbroken sequence of events from the initial flaring forth to the beauty, fruitfulness and diversity of life on this blue-green planet. Everything that is now present in our universe and more particularly on earth has emerged through these unbroken series of transformations. Everything is

connected to everything else. Humans, for example, have emerged from the rocks and the flowers.

The Origin moment in the great flaring forth

Some 13.7 billion years ago, in a great flash the universe flared forth into being. The British astronomer Fred Hoyle facetiously called this singularity the Big Bang in a radio broadcast in 1952. Everything in the universe is rooted in the extraordinary generativity of that first moment when primordial energy blazed with an intensity never to be equalled again. This model of the universe captured by the image 'flaring forth' was first developed in the 1920's and 1930's by the Russian scientist, Aleksandr Friedmann (1888 – 1925) and the Belgian priest scientist Georges Lemaître (1894–1966). They postulated that the universe began much smaller and much hotter. It began with a 'singularity' no bigger than the centre of an atom.

By 400,000 years radiation had weakened and the Universe had cooled so atoms could begin to form. This gave rise to the atoms of hydrogen and helium. The Universe ended up being 75% Hydrogen and 25% helium. This is close to what it is today. With the emergence of matter mass and gravity became important.

Now the four forces of the Universe are in play – gravity, electromagnetism, the strong nuclear force and the weak nuclear force. We may ask why four? We are not sure but we know that they were the result of the process of preceding processes. This has led to the situation that the initial singularity of the universe now appeared as four different activities. In this transitional phase, as it were, the fundamental architecture of the universe's interactions were set for all time. Gravity, electromagnetism, the strong nuclear force and weak nuclear force would apply in every part of the universe and act in the same way.

Cosmic Moments of Grace

In his writings Thomas Berry speaks about cosmic moments of grace, by which he means events, which are crucial to the development of a universe which supports life and intelligent life, often happen at almost zero possibility. For example the relative strength of the four forces of nature are critical to the development of the universe, the earth, life on earth and the emergence of humanity. If the rate of expansion one second after the flaring forth had been smaller than even one part in a hundred thousand million, million the Universe would have collapsed before it reached its present size.[1] If the explosion had been more violent the gases produced – hydrogen and helium – would have moved apart so fast that there would have been no local density/differences and, therefore, no first generation stars would have formed.

The anthropic principle is another example of a cosmic moment of grace – this time for biological life. According to John Polkinghorne this is based on a collection of scientific insights which indicate that the possibility of the evolution of a carbon-based life depended on a very delicate balance among the basic forces of nature and, possibly, also on very specified initial circumstances of the universe.[2]

What is particularly striking in the emergence of the universe is the lack of repetition in its development. Fireball gave rise to the galactic phase and the first generation of stars. The

hydrogen/ helium percentage of gases in the universe only took place once. Later some of these gave rise to solar systems and planets, each different from the rest. The oceans only arose once. We find these crucial moments in a universe of unending diversity.

The Galactic Phase: 10 – 13.7 billion years ago

The first star did not appear from possibly 100 million years after the flaring forth.[3]

Then clouds of the hydrogen gas that had cooled down clustered together and, under the force of gravity, heated up again giving rise to the first gigantic stars and galaxies. This formation of the first stars and proto-galaxies began the process of cosmic evolution.[4] The largest of these stars are called *supernova*. The normal *supernova* is about 20 times larger than our Sun. Most stars die after their hydrogen has been exhausted with little enough fuss. When a supernova 'dies' the explosion releases the energy of a hundred billion suns. This process is known as nucleosynthesis. As supernovas collapse they spew out the heavier elements like carbon and iron. Carbon is the chemical basis of life. So the carbon atoms in every living cell like the cells in our bodies have once been part of distant stars and probably other creatures before they became part of us.

Formation of Solar System: 5 billion years ago

Our mother star, in the Milky Way, exploded and scattered its stardust into space. Our solar system emerged out of the creativity of so many former beings. The elements of the pre-solar cloud from which it emerged, had been created by former supernova stars and by the primordial fireball. Gradually, though the action of gravity, this ball began to bond together and ignite and give rise to a nuclear reaction. At this moment in time 4 million tons of hydrogen are transformed into helium each second. This energy fires almost every organic activity on planet earth. By itself the sun holds 99.9% of the matter in the solar system.

Earth: 4.5 billion years ago

When the sun had been formed some of the residue of elements swirling about the sun gave rise eventually to Mercury, Venus, Earth and the other planets. It is estimated that it took about 200 million years in all for the Earth to form. Right through that period it was bombarded with cosmic debris and it was still molten.

The Earth is neither too big or nor too small; it is not too warm or too cold for life to emerge and survive on it. The precise location of the earth in relation to the sun is also hugely important. It makes it possible to maintain an optimal temperature for the emergence of complex molecules, and hence of life. If it were closer everything would have burned; if further away everything would have frozen. Earth is 93 million miles from the sun and light travels from it at the rate of 186,000 miles a second. Our Sun too is the right size. If it had been much bigger it would have burned out in 10 million instead of 10 billion years. It takes about 8 minutes for energy from the Sun to reach the Earth.

About 4.4 billion years ago a large object, possibly the size of Mars, collided with the earth and dislocated a huge amount of matter which went on to form the moon. Within a very short period of time the displaced material reassembled itself into a sphere and began to circle the earth. Our moon has a steadying influence on the Earth. Its gravitational pull keeps the earth spinning at the right speed. It also keeps it spinning at the right angle. This stability over long periods of time was vital in the development of life on earth. It is also very important in terms of movement within the ocean and tides.

Over a period of time the 'infant' earth acquired an atmosphere mostly made up of carbon dioxide, nitrogen, methane and sulfur. It was not like the current oxygen-free

atmosphere but was dominated by carbon dioxide and methane. The carbon began to give rise to a green-house effect. This was very important for the 'infant' planet because the luminosity of the sun was much less then than it is today. Without this greenhouse gas the earth might have remained a frozen planet, inhospitable for life.

For about 500 million years the young earth was continually bombarded by meteorites. These visitors brought material which would eventually become the water that fills our oceans and the elements which are necessary for life. Initially the earth was a cauldron of gaseous material. It cooled gradually and formed the atmosphere, oceans and land mass.

We now know that the Earth's crust is not like an orange skin, continuous right around the planet, but is made up of different sections called plates. The first person to develop a theory on the movement of plates was geologist Alfred Wegener (1889– 1930). Looking at a map of the world he noticed that South America seemed to fit nicely into Africa. His theory of plate tectonics was dismissed by geologists and other scientists of the time, including Albert Einstein. It is only since the 1960s that it is now accepted that the crust of the earth is composed of between 8 and 12 large plates.

Emergence of the Ocean: 4.45 billion years ago

The oceans have a very special place in the story of the universe. To us the oceans may seem ordinary but we can truly appreciate their significance when we view them as the universe unfolding itself in a new way. As far as we know running water is found nowhere else in the Universe. Water vapour or ice may have been found on other planets but only on our planet have the oceans been created and maintained for four billion years.

Furthermore, the oceans are the womb of life. The origin of life remains a mystery. It appears that gradually more complex elements emerged in the oceans, including amino acids and, finally, proteins. Proteins are extraordinary and, by all the laws of probability, should not exist. In order to make a protein you must assemble amino acids in a particular order like the way we need the proper sequence of alphabet letters to spell a word correctly.

Emergence of life: 4 billion years ago

Life emerged when the Earth was being bombarded by multiple lightening storms. A prokaryote is an organism whose cell lacks organelles and a nucleus. These prokaryotic cells are the basic building blocks of life. They reproduced asexually by dividing and creating exact copies of themselves. These bacteria can live forever if the environmental conditions remain right.

For almost 2 billion years bacteria were the only form of life on earth. During the first billion years the blue-green algae learned how to draw 'fixed' hydrogen from the oceans and released oxygen into Earth's carbon dominated atmosphere. This was the beginning of photosynthesis. Gradually oxygen began to saturate the land, atmosphere and the seas. In the anaerobic world (lacking oxygen) oxygen is toxic so this new development created problems for the living world.

In time a new, more complex form of life emerged. These were cells which had organelles (little tools in Greek) and also possessed a nucleus. The captive bacterium became a mitochondrion. In this way oxygen is now turned into a source of energy which drives most biochemical reactions in living organisms. Oxygen provides the energy a cell needs to move and divide.

These new entities are called eukaryotic cells. They emerged about 2 billion years

ago as the result of the merger of different prokaryotic cells. These are nucleated cells which contain a large number of oxygen using sub-cellular units called organelles. In time the eukaryotic cells became much bigger than their prokaryotic older cousins.

The Beginning of the Era of Co-operation

3.5 billion years ago in shallow seas cyanobacteria began to cling together and form visible structures which are called stromatolites from the Greek word for matress. This was the first communion experience. Another significant breakthrough for life was the emergence of a nervous system and brain in a worm species.

About 1.3 billion years ago single cells gathered together and committed themselves to each other. In the more complex processes this enhanced the venture of life. An increase in size gives selective advantage. The diversity and cooperation was further expanded by the invention of meiotic sex, about one billion years ago. This meant that two different genetic beings could unite to form a totally new being. Their offspring inherit one set of chromosomes from each parent. This rich genetic heritage enhances their chance of survival in different environments.

The Emergence of Plants

Plants evolved from green algae. They gradually came ashore from the ocean to dry land. To survive they had to bring with them their own water supply. This process of colonisation happened about 450 million years ago.

There are about 250,000 varieties of plants. They include liverworts, mosses, horsetails, ferns, ginkgos, conifers and flowering plants. One of the major transformations in the life of plants was the movement from water to the land. They needed to bring the water with them and formed a waxy layer, the cuticle over most of their surface.

A number of features are associated with flowering plants or *angiosperms*. First of all they are flowers which are pollinated by wind, insects or birds. The second feature is the ovule which is enclosed within layers of tissue. Fertilisation takes place through the pollen tube. Flowering species have been very successful in the past 50 million years and today comprise about 90% of all plant species.

Palaeozoic Era: 600 - 245 million years ago

During this period the first soft-bodied animals evolved in the oceans e.g. jellyfish. One of the greatest inventions of this era was the development of a hard shell using the minerals, phosphorus and calcium.

Mesozoic Era 235 - 67 million years ago

In the change over from the Palaeozoic to the Mesozoic Era two things emerged that altered the character of terrestrial animal life. The first was the development, in reptiles, of an amniotic egg, i.e. a membranous fluid-filled sac which was water tight and which protected the developing embryo. This meant that the animals were now free of bodies of water for mating purposes and were able to roam far and wide inland. There are about 6.500 different kinds of reptiles. Some of the better known are crocodiles, alligators, turtles, lizards, dinosaurs and snakes.

The first mammals appeared in the late Triassic period about 210 million years ago. In the intervening period the educated guess is that there have been 100 mammalian species for every one of the species which exists today. The number today is 4.300 though new species of mammals are being discovered as I write.[5]

Mammals are warm blooded creatures that evolved from reptiles and carried their young within their own bodies. These creatures have various distinctions. The baleen whale is the largest animal to have ever existed on the planet, though many people might mistakenly believe that this distinction belongs to some dinosaur. The cheetah is the fastest animal that has ever lived and no animal in the history of life has had the stamina of either horse or dog.

For almost 100 million years mammals and dinosaurs existed together on the planet but dinosaurs were the masters as only a few species of mammals reached the size of a polecat. Mammals really thrived during the cenozoic period after the dinosaurs had been eliminated.

Extinction

It is important to emphasize that life did not continue to evolve in a straight line pattern as it were. We know from the fossil records that there have been five moments of mass extinction of species. We are familiar with mass extinction at the end of the Mesozoic period that wiped out the dinosaurs. It seems that a large meteor crashed into the planet somewhere in the area of modern Mexico. The impact of the meteor threw up huge quantities of dust darkening the earth and interfered with photosynthesis. As a result of this cosmic accident the dinosaurs' habitat was destroyed.

David Attenborough

At the beginning of the 21st century we are witnessing another great extinction spasm. On 29 November 2000 David Attenborough on a BBC Nature programme (entitled *The State of the Planet*) stated that if we continue destroying the habitat of other creatures as we have been doing in recent decades half the species on the planet will be extinct within the next 50 to a 100 years. This is a horrendous thought and yet little is being done to stop this haemorrhage of life. Biologists like Edward Wilson, author of *The Diversity of Life* (1993, Penguin) point out that this present extinction is not caused by cosmic or climatic conditions but by one species – *Homo sapiens*. Looked at even from a selfish perspective human kind needs this diversity of species for its food and medicinal requirements. Finally, and most chilling of all, the contemporary extinction spasm is not another pruning of life which will give birth to a new era of biological creativity. Unfortunately it is a great sterilizing for which future generations will curse this wasteful and destructive generation.

Cenozoic Era: 55 million years ago it started

Over the course of the next 55 million years Earth greeted rodents, whales, monkeys, horses, cats and dogs, apes, grazing animals, elephants, camels, pigs, baboons, primates and the first humans. It was the age of flowers, primates and hominids. Primates evolved from mammals about 55 million years ago. Over the next 50 million years they diversified into lemurs, tarsiers, gibbons, orang-outangs, gorillas, chimpanzees, monkeys, apes and eventually hominids. There are about 200 species of primates.

The Emergence of Humans

Seven million years ago a new species broke off from the chimpanzee line. They are called *Australopithecines*. They were bipedal and emerged in Africa. One of these named 'Lucy' was discovered in Ethiopia in 1974. She was quite diminutive, just three and a half feet tall and with a brain capacity of 400-500 cubic centimeters. She is the first in the line of *Australopithecus*.

One group that did use tools was *homo habilis* and like the *australopithecines* they were bipedal. The increasingly dexterous use of hands 'encouraged' greater brain capacity and greater intelligence. This increased humans' ability to out manoeuvre other creatures and capture them for food.

Present knowledge indicates that *Homo Erectus* is linked to *Homo Habilis*. They appeared about 1.8 million years ago in Kenya and had more 'human' features than 'ape'-like features. Some scientists feel that *Homo Erectus* is not the ancestor of humans but rather an evolutionary dead end, albeit a very successful one for over 200,000 years. They claim that the cousins, *Homo Ergaster,* who remained at home in Africa has a better claim to being our direct ancestor. These emerged about 400,000 years ago in Africa. In Europe they are known as *Homo Sapiens Neanderthalensis*.

The direct ancestors of our species, *Homo Sapiens, Sapiens* emerged in Africa about 100,000 years ago. They had the ability to speak. Speech led to more cohesive social relations and also to the development of symbolic language and art, as well as the capacity for song and dance. This group populated the planet within a relatively short period of time. For most of his/her existence on the Earth *Homo Sapiens*, *Sapiens* has been a hunter and gatherer. This was the tribal age. It was a period of great creativity for humankind. A wide variety of languages, and social, political, moral and religious systems emerged during this springtime of human creativity. Tribal people created the world of myth, and they identified and shaped many of the archetypal structures of human consciousness which still guide our secular and religious life today.

The Beginnings of Agriculture

Between 12 and 10 thousand years ago in the Neolithic period, new social structures appeared and new technologies including weaving and pottery. Agriculture began with the domestication of wheat and rice, also of sheep, pigs, cattle, horses and chickens. One of the major changes which humans wrought on the planet was by turning to agriculture about 11,000 B.C. This involved planting seeds and harvesting them and also domesticating animals. One major result of agriculture was the increase in population density as farmers lived in settled communities. Naturally, hunters and gatherers continued their way of life in tandem with agriculturalists.

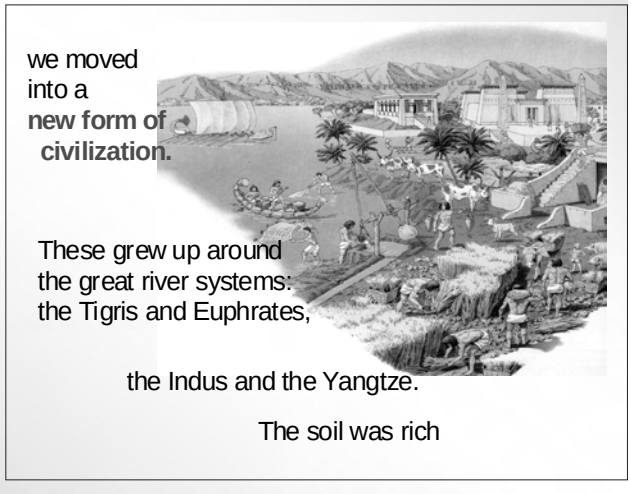
Civilizations

Then, some five thousand years ago the Western civilization story began to unfold. It and many other cultures arose in river valleys – the Tigris/Euphrates, the Indus, the Ganges and the Yangtze. In Mesoamerica, among the Mayan and Aztec, it was somewhat different.

Classical religions began to emerge about 3,000 years ago such as Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam and these have profoundly shaped our moral and religious consciousness. Through agriculture and new patterns of life humans began to shape the environment in an extensive way. This was the period when villages began. Towns and cities eventually arose out of these simple social structures.

During this period writing was invented. This helped solve numerous organisational

challenges which numerous and far-flung cultures posed to political and commercial leaders. The written word also enabled societies to record their cherished myths, stories, poetry and liturgies. In the legal sphere it allowed leaders to promulgate laws and scholars to plot the movement of the heavenly bodies. This in turn led to the development of the calendar.



Another important legacy of this era was the development of abstract thought. This began in Greece in the 4th century B.C. but it continued right through Roman times and the Middle Ages right up to our time.

Technological Age

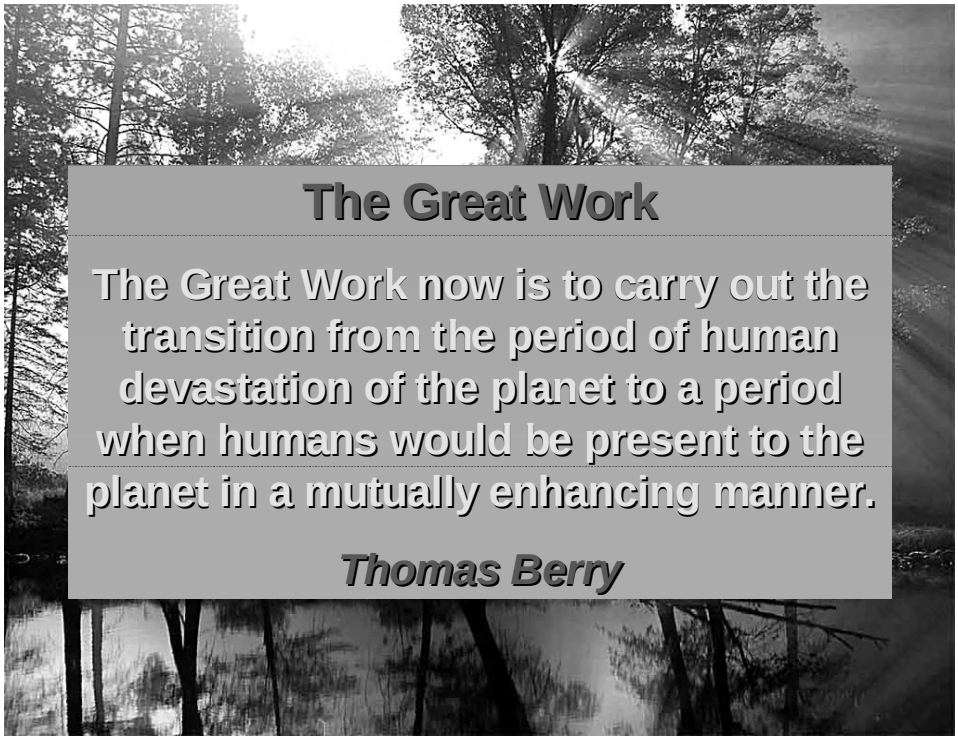
This began about 200 years ago and was grounded in the scientific insights of people like Roger Bacon, René Descartes and Isaac Newton. That new scientific age gave rise to revolutionary technologies. As technologies became more sophisticated humans had greater power to transform the world of nature in extraordinary ways. Much of this transformation happened through pressure from the liberal capitalism economy system.

The first phase of the industrial revolution began in Britain. The source of energy was coal which was abundant. It drove the steam revolution. Then Thomas Edison's discoveries regarding the use of electricity, and the discovery and use of oil in the later part of the 19th century led to the electrical and petrochemical phase of the industrial age. Studies in physics at the turn of the 20th century finally led to the emergence of nuclear power both civilian and military. This era began with the bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945. Further revolutions in the 20th century involved the micro-chip and digital age. On the biological side developments in genetics and biotechnology have led to the biotech era in agriculture and medicine. In *To Care for the Earth* I wrote; *one cannot deny that some comforts and benefits of this age have helped ease the toil of life for many, the benefits have come at enormous cost. The industrial age has changed chemistry, geology and biology of planet Earth and affected every preceding phase of the story of the universe in an irreversible way.*[6]

An atlas produced by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) called *Atlas for Population and Environment* shows the extent to which technology has transformed the world. Many of these changes are doing enormous damage to the fabric of the earth. Two-thirds of the world's rivers have been damned for electricity and irrigation. The challenge of the 21st century is to develop technologies which work with the Earth's processes. We have changed the chemistry of the planet, the biosphere and even the geology of the planet. Humans need to radically change the way they see, view and relate to the Earth.

The Great Work

According to Thomas Berry in his book, *The Great Work,* as we move into the new millennium humans are challenged to carry out a transition from the period of human devastation of the planet to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually enhancing manner. Responding to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the Poor ought to be at the centre of Christian discipleship and Mission today.



Notes

[1] Hawking, Stephen, 1988, *A Brief History of Time*, Bamtham Books, p. 34.

[2] Ponkinghorne, John, 1996, *Science and Christian Belief,* SPCK, London, p. 195.

[3] Richard B. Larson and Volker Broom, "The First Stars in the Universe*", Scientific America,* Special Edition, Vol. 14, no. 4, 2004, p. 4.

[4] *Idem*, p. 11.

[5] Colin Tudge, 2000, *The Variety of Life: A Survey and a Celebration of All the CREATURES that have EVER LIVED,* Oxford University Press, p. 233.

[6] Seán McDonagh, 1985, *To Care for The Earth*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, p. 92.

Denis Edwards

Ecological Commitment and the Following of Jesus

Making the connection between ecological commitment and Jesus of Nazareth is at the centre of a Christian ecological theology. This connection is not something that can be taken for granted. It is far from obvious to many people that ecology has anything to with Jesus. Numbers of Christians who are deeply committed to ecology find it easy enough to see their commitment in relation to God as Creator, but cannot see a connection with the story of Jesus.mmitted

It is an urgent task for theology to show the inter-connection between the living memory of Jesus and the issues that confront the global community. Only when this connection is made will ecological action be seen not only as ethically responsible, but also as radically Christian, as the faithful praxis of Christian discipleship. Only then will the wider Christian community be challenged from within its own Christian depths to ecological conversion.

According to the Gospel tradition, Jesus embodies the compassion of God in his person, his words and his actions. He offers healing and hope to those suffering from illness and exclusion. He brings liberation and joy to those imprisoned by psychological bonds. He invites women as well as men into the circle of his followers to form a new family of sisters and brothers. He interprets God's gift of the *Torah* in terms of compassion. He announces forgiveness for sinners and celebrates festive meals with public sinners and outcasts that anticipate God's coming Reign. He teaches that love is the meaning of everything, love for God with one's whole self and love for one's neighbour as oneself. He insists that this love has no limits. It can have no borders. It is to embrace the enemy.

In the limited and finite life of Jesus there is unleashed an explosive dynamism of compassion that knows no boundaries. This is evident in every aspect of Jesus' ministry, but it reaches its radical expression in the absolute dark night of his death and in the Disciples' experience of Jesus as the Risen One. In encountering Jesus beyond death, the Disciples discover that the compassion of God manifest in Jesus cannot be contained by the tomb, but breaks free as a dynamic power of liberation and hope. In a way that remains ever mysterious, the utter humiliation, ugliness and brutality of the Cross has become a spring of compassionate life flowing out into the whole world. What flows forth is nothing less than the dynamic Spirit of God.

In all of this, the first Christians become convinced that a new stage in God's salvation history had been reached. They see what has occurred in Jesus as having universal meaning. The unstoppable dynamism of the Spirit leads them beyond the boundaries of Jesus' own

ministry that had been centred on Israel. In the power of the Spirit, the Disciples come to understand that fidelity to the God revealed by Jesus now demands a new universality. Divine compassion is directed to the whole world and reaches out beyond the human community to embrace "all things" in the reconciliation of Christ (Col 1:15-20).

Through the ages, Christian saints and sages have recognized that this divine compassion does not stop with human beings. Paul told the first Christian community in Rome that the whole of Creation awaits its redemption in Christ (Rom 8:19-24). At the end of the second century, Irenaeus saw the whole of creation as recapitulated (summed up and transformed) in Christ and as destined to share in Christ's victory over death. In the thirteenth century Francis of Assisi showed how divine compassion embodied in Jesus reaches out to embrace individual animals and birds as brothers and sisters to us before God. In the early twentieth century, Teilhard de Chardin came to see the whole of evolutionary history as empowered by the risen Christ, the Omega who is the source and goal of the whole emergent process.

Christians who reflect on Jesus today, from the perspective of the twenty-first century, do so as participants in a human community engaged in the extinction of uncounted species of living creatures. This context challenges us to think again about the compassion of God revealed in Christ and its relationship to the non-human creatures of our global community. In this chapter, I will begin to take up this issue from what we know about Jesus' own attitude to Creation. This will be followed by some reflections on the way that the first Christians understood Jesus in relation to creation, as the Wisdom of God in our midst. Then I will outline the notion of "deep incarnation" and conclude by offering some thoughts on the meaning of Jesus Christ in the context of evolution. Chapter 5 will continue this exploration, focussing on the final transformation of all things in the Risen Christ.

1. Creation in the Life and Ministry of Jesus

The living memory of Jesus was passed on orally in the Liturgy, preaching and life of the first Christian communities before finding written expression in the Gospels. In this living memory, Jesus is not only celebrated as the messianic Son of God, but also remembered as a great prophet and as an extraordinary teacher of wisdom. And like the long line of wisdom teachers of Israel, Jesus is remembered as someone who sees the natural world as the place of God.

Jesus, as a wisdom teacher, speaks of God and God's Reign in parables and proverbial sayings. He makes a gifted use of parables, communicating the deepest things of God in stories and images from the natural world and from the cultural world of human communities. His images come from the whole of life: the beauty of wild flowers, the growth of trees from tiny seeds, crops of grain, bread rising, a woman sweeping a floor looking for what was lost, children playing games, the relationship between a shepherd and the sheep, the birds of the air, foxes and their lairs, rain falling, and the generosity of a parent to a wayward child.

The parables reflect a close observation and delight in the natural world as the place of God. They could arise only in a person who looks on Creation with contemplative and loving eyes. As C.H. Dodd concludes in his classic study, the parables reveal that for Jesus there is an "inward affinity between the natural order and the spiritual order." Dodd argues that "the sense of the divineness of the natural order is the major premise of all the parables."[1]

Jesus' parables of the Reign of God are the products of one who sees Creation as the gift of God and as the place of divine presence.

The memory of Jesus' prayer in the wilderness is a further witness that for him, as for other mystics in the Jewish and Christian traditions, the natural world is a place of encounter with the living God. His prayer in the desert and in the hills of Galilee points to the wilderness as the place where he found communion with the God he proclaimed.

The Gospels report Jesus going out into the wilderness for thirty days at the beginning of his ministry. There he experiences temptation and, we are told, "he was with the wild beasts" and "the angels ministered to him" (Mk 1:13). Mark describes Jesus as getting up early and going out to a deserted place to pray (Mk 1:35). Luke, in one of his many references to Jesus at prayer, tells of him going out into the hills to pray and spending the night in prayer (Lk 6:12). As his Passion approaches, the three synoptic Gospels tell of Jesus praying outdoors in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he struggles in darkness and pain and entrusts his life and death to God.

The Gospel memory of Jesus' parables taken from nature and his prayer in the wilderness provide a context for interpreting Jesus' explicit sayings about God's compassion for non-human creation. These are the well known texts, where Jesus teaches that God feeds and clothes each bird of the air and each lily of the field (Mt 6:28; Lk 12:27) and where he speaks of God's provident care for *every single sparrow* that falls to the ground (Mt 10:29; Lk 12:6). The focal point of these sayings is God's provident care for human beings. But the assumption made in them is that every sparrow that falls to the ground matters to God. There is no doubt that the Gospels present God's provident care for human beings as unique and special — "the hairs on your head are all counted" (Mt 10:30).

Jesus sees God as the one who can be addressed in a familial and very human way as "Abba" (Mk: 14:36). He clearly sees God as a God who bends over us with love, a God who cherishes human beings and brings them liberation and hope.[2] But for Jesus this Abba is also the Creator God, the One who makes the Sun rise and who sends rain upon the just and the unjust (Mt 5:45), who is radically a God for human beings, but also a God for all creatures. When Jesus' words are understood in the context of his other parables taken from nature and his practice of prayer in the wilderness, I think it can said with confidence that Jesus looks on wildflowers and sparrows with loving eyes and sees them as both loved by God and as revelatory of God.

2. The Early Christian Community Sees Jesus as the Wisdom of God

The experience of Jesus' Resurrection radically transformed the battered and defeated followers of Jesus. In the process it led them to reflect on his meaning and identity. It convinced them that what was present with them in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus was nothing less than God. They were well aware of the humanity of Jesus. They had lived though the events of Jesus' ministry and humiliating death. They now needed to find a way of telling the story of Jesus as a story that begins from God. They needed to be able to speak of God's self-giving to us in Jesus. They needed to find ways of speaking of Jesus as "God-with-us" (Mt 1:23).

Recent scholarship has shown that devotion to Christ as one with God arose very early in the life of the Church, as early as the pre-Pauline Christian community centred in Jerusalem.[3] In Paul's own writings this is simply taken for granted as is the Risen Christ's cosmic role. In a remarkable text Paul writes: "Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (I Cor 8:6). Clearly Paul sees "all things" in the universe as in some way having their existence through Christ. And he sees Christ as not only involved with the origin of things but with their final transformation. He sees the whole of creation as finding redemption and final liberation in Christ (Rom 8:21).

How does this cosmic view of the Risen Christ arise? It seems that one of the contributing factors was the already existing theology of the Wisdom of God. In the biblical Wisdom literature, God's self-communication is beautifully personified in female terms as the *Wisdom Woman* (*Hokmah* in Hebrew, *Sophia* in Greek). In these Wisdom writings, the Wisdom Woman is not understood as a second God alongside the God of the Covenant, but as a way of talking about the presence and action of the one God of Israel.

There are two central characteristics of the Wisdom Woman. First, *she is intimately involved with the whole of Creation.* She is pictured as with God in Creation, a co-creator with God, a companion with God delighting in all God's creatures (Prov 8:22-31; Sir 24:3-7; Wis 7:25-8:1). Wisdom is a "tree of life" (Prov 3:18). It is by her that God founds the earth, establishes the heavens, breaks open the deep, and enables the clouds to drop down their dew as refreshing, life-giving rain (Prov 3:19-20). Second, *she comes to dwell in our midst*. She makes her home with us, sets her table, prepares her great banquet and invites the poor and needy to come to eat and drink of what she has prepared (Prov 9:1-6: Sir 24:8-22). Wisdom is both the one in whom all things are created and the one who has now come to dwell amongst us.

While Jewish believers could see God's gift of the Law (*Torah*) as the Wisdom of God who has made her home amongst us (Sir 24:23), early Christian believers could identify Jesus as the Wisdom of God in our midst. Paul insists, against all competing human claims to wisdom, that the Wisdom of God is found revealed in Christ crucified (I Cor 1:24, 30). He argues forcefully that God's Wisdom is revealed precisely in what seems like the utter foolishness and powerlessness of the Cross. Matthew sees Jesus as the Wisdom of God in our midst. It is Jesus who does the healing and liberating deeds of Wisdom (Mt 11:20) and who as Wisdom come to make her home with us cries out: "Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). In the Gospel of John, Jesus-Wisdom is proclaimed as the Word made flesh (Jn 1:1-18), and is presented as the One who invites the poor and needy to his table and gives himself to them as the Bread of Life (Jn 6).

Throughout the New Testament there are texts that may be remnants of early Christian hymns, which sing of Jesus in terms that echo the wisdom tradition. In the short hymn in the opening of Hebrews for example Christ is presented, like Wisdom, as the One through whom God creates all things (1:2). We read that Christ is "the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word" (1:3). The description of the Risen Christ, as the "reflection" and "imprint" of God and the one who "sustains" all things, echoes the *Wisdom of Solomon*, where it is said of *Sophia* that she is "the image of God" (Wis 7:26) and that "she reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well" (Wis 8:1).

In is worth noting how in each of these hymns, the words "all things" form a constant refrain. The repeated use of this expression points insistently to the cosmic meaning of Christ. A second example of a Wisdom-type hymn to the Risen Christ is found in the opening chapter of John's Gospel. Here Jesus is again understood in categories and in language taken from the Wisdom literature[4], but he is described as the Word of God rather than the Wisdom of God:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.… He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.… And the Word became flesh and lived among us (*cf.* Jn 1:1-14).

Jesus is celebrated as the Word made flesh. But we are being told that the story of this Word does not begin with the life of Jesus. The Word was with God in the beginning and had an active role in the creation of "all things." According to this hymn, everything that has ever come to be in the long history of Creation exists only in and through the Word. In terms of what we know today, this would involve seeing this Word of God as the Word of the Big Bang, the primordial hydrogen, star formation, the Milky Way Galaxy, planet Earth, bacteria, clams, frogs and chimpanzees. It is this endlessly *creative* Word that is made flesh in Jesus.

A third example of a cosmic hymn to the Risen Christ modelled on Wisdom is found in Colossians:

> He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation;
> for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created,
> things visible and invisible,
> whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers –
> all things have been created through him and for him.
> He himself is before all things and in him all things hold together.
> He is the head of the body, the Church;
> he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, so that he might come to have first
>
> place in everything.
> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
> and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things,
> whether on earth or in heaven,
> by making peace through the blood of the cross (*cf.* Col 1:15-20).

Here the cosmic Christ is celebrated as both the *source* of Creation and its *goal*: all things have been *created* in Christ and "all things" are *reconciled* in him. All things are created in Christ who is the Image (*Icon*) of the invisible God. As in the Wisdom literature *Sophia* is with God in creation and continually sustains all things, so in Colossians the Risen Christ is the One in whom all things are created and in whom all things hold together. The Colossians hymn goes further, asserting that in Christ and Christ's Cross, God has reconciled all things to God's self. Everything in Creation is created in Christ, sustained in him and reconciled in him.

The universal role of Christ is driven home not just by the oft-repeated "all things," but also by the repeated explanation that this involves everything in what were seen as the two great cosmic realms of heaven and earth, and by the further insistence that it includes all the cosmic powers — "whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers." In ancient cosmologies, these angelic beings were thought of as controlling the movements of the sun, the moon and the stars. It seems that some at Colossae worshipped these cosmic powers and the Letter makes it clear that all cosmic forces are taken up by Christ and transformed in the power of the resurrection. Everything in the universe is to be transfigured in Christ-Wisdom, the *Icon* of the invisible God.

In Colossians, Christ's death and Resurrection is understood as the beginning of the transformation of the whole of Creation. This same idea appears in Ephesians, where we are told that all things will be gathered up in the risen Christ (1:9-10; 20-23). In Revelation, we hear of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rv 21:1) and the risen Christ is proclaimed "the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (Rv 22:13). In the yearly cycle of the Liturgy, many Christians use these words from Revelation as they light the Easter candle from the new fire of the Easter Vigil. Then, illuminated by the light of the Easter candle, the symbol of the Risen One, they listen to readings from Scripture that tell the story of salvation beginning with the Genesis account of the creation of all things. Every Easter is a celebration of the whole of Creation transformed in the light of the risen Christ. Far from being restricted to human beings, the Christ-event involves everything on Earth, from ants and beetles to pelicans and whales. It involves every part of the 14 billion year story of our universe and of the 3.8 billion year history of life on Earth.

In recent years, feminist theologians have led the way in recovering a theology of Jesus in terms of divine Wisdom, or *Sophia*. Some, like Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza have focussed on Jesus as a child and prophet of *Sophia*.[5] Others, like Elizabeth Johnson, have developed a

christology of Jesus as the Wisdom of God. In this theology, Jesus is understood as revelatory of God symbolized as the female *Sophia*. This has the effect of breaking the stranglehold of androcentric thinking and points to the God-with-us in Jesus as beyond male and female, but inclusive of both.[6] In my view this opens up to a viable and life-giving Wisdom christology, that is both feminist and ecological. Jesus the Wisdom of God can be seen as inclusive of both female and male, and of both human and non-human creation.[7]

Wisdom Christology, like Word of God Christology and Son of God Christology, involves a view of pre-existence and incarnation. It proposes that what we meet in Jesus of Nazareth is someone who is God-with-us, truly of God and sent by God. But Wisdom Christology contains a healthy reminder that what pre-exists is not the humanity of Jesus. It encourages a healthy negative theology about that which pre-exists in the divine life. It makes it clear that pre-existent Wisdom is neither male nor female, but transcends both. And it points to a divine Wisdom that finds expression not just in the human but in the whole of Creation. This kind of wisdom theology is depicted in the beautiful mosaic in the Church of *San Clemente* in Rome, where the Cross of Christ is the tree of life for all creatures.

3. Deep Incarnation

As theologians have attempted to articulate a Christian ecological theology, they have turned to the central idea of incarnation. At the heart of Christian faith is the affirmation that Jesus of Nazareth is the *Word made flesh* (Jn 1:14). What is meant by flesh in this affirmation is not only the fully human reality of Jesus, but the whole of humanity embraced by God in the incarnation. As the great patristic theologians like Irenaeus and Athanasius taught, in the Word made flesh God becomes human so that the whole of humanity might be healed, taken up into God and deified in God.

However, the meaning of the incarnation, of becoming flesh, is not restricted to humanity. The flesh that is embraced by God is not limited to the human. It includes the whole interconnected world of fleshly life and, in some way, includes the whole universe to which flesh is related and on which it depends. On this basis, Australian theologian Duncan Reid has argued for an eco-Christology in which affirmations about God's embrace of humanity in the incarnation are always to be understood in the context of the wider claim that the Word has become flesh. Flesh points beyond the humanity of Jesus, and beyond the human community embraced by God in the incarnation, to the biological world of living creatures.[8] Flesh evokes the whole world of inter-related organisms. It suggests that in becoming flesh, God has embraced all creatures in the interconnected web of life. New Zealand theologian Neil Darragh comments on this line of thought: "To say that God became flesh is not only to say that God became human, but to say also that God became an Earth creature, that God became a sentient being, that God became a living being (in common with all other living beings), that God became a complex Earth unit of minerals and fluids, that God became an item in the carbon and nitrogen cycles."[9]

In Jesus of Nazareth, God becomes a vital part of an ecosystem, and a part of the interconnected systems that support life on Earth. Danish theologian Niels Gregersen calls this the idea of *deep incarnation*. He argues that, in Christ, God enters into biological life in a new way and is now with evolving Creation in a radically new way. In Christ God is with all forms of life in their suffering limitation. The Cross of Christ reveals God's identification with Creation in all its complexity, struggle and pain. Gregersen finds in the Cross a microcosm of God's redemptive presence to all creatures that face suffering and death. He writes:

> In this context, the incarnation of God in Christ can be understood as a radical or 'deep' incarnation, that is, an incarnation into the very tissue of biological existence, and system of nature. Understood this way, the death of Christ becomes an icon of God's

> redemptive co-suffering with all sentient life as well as with the victims of social competition. God bears the cost of evolution, the price involved in the hardship of natural selection.[10]

I believe that this concept of deep incarnation is faithful to the Christian tradition, which claims with Paul, that the whole of Creation waits with "eager longing" for its liberation from "bondage to decay" and for the freedom associated with the "glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:19-23). It is congruent with the Colossians hymn referred to above, in which Christ is celebrated as the "Icon of the invisible God," as the "first-born of all creation," as the one through whom "all things in heaven and on earth were created," as the One in whom "all things hold together," and as the one through whom "God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of the Cross" (1:15-20).

The concept of deep incarnation also reflects the insights of evolutionary biology concerning the interconnections of all living things in the one history of life on Earth. Biology does not allow us to see human flesh as an isolated reality. Human beings can only be understood as inter-related with the other life-forms of our planet and interconnected with the atmosphere, the land and the seas that sustain life. A theology that takes biology seriously can see human beings only as part of the 3.8 billion year history of life on Earth. And, precisely because theology is committed to God as Creator, it must take biology seriously. A biologically informed theology cannot think of the human without taking into account our dependence on the creatures that have gone before us in evolutionary history and our ecological interdependence with the biological systems of the planet.

Today, in a world where countless forms of life have been destroyed and many more are under threat, we need a deeper appropriation of the meaning of *God-with-us* in Christ. We need to think of *God-with-us* in the sense of *God-with-all-living-things*. In the concept of deep incarnation, the Christ-event can be understood as God entering into the evolutionary history of life on Earth, embracing finite creaturely existence from within. In the Word made flesh, God is revealed at the heart of the human, and precisely as such, is revealed as at the heart of all life on Earth. The flesh of Jesus is part of the whole creaturely pattern of life on Earth. When the Word is made flesh, God embraces the long interconnected history of life in all its complexity and diversity. The incarnation is God-with-us in the "very tissue" of biological life. If God is with us in Christ Jesus in the very tissue of biological life, this raises further questions about the theological connection between the event of Christ and evolutionary history.

4. Jesus Christ in an Evolutionary World

Karl Rahner has offered some important reflections on the compatibility of Christology with an evolutionary view of the world.[11] He asks whether it is possible to find an inner relationship between the Christ-event and evolution. He seeks a coherent theology that is faithful to the Christian tradition's deepest insights into the meaning of Christ and that also respects the findings of evolutionary biology.

He begins from the fundamental *unity* of Creation. This unity is found first in the fact that all things spring from the one Creator. Second, creatures are united now in one inter-related and interdependent evolving universe. And, third, the whole of Creation will reach its culmination by being taken up as one into God. Creation is united in its one origin, in its self-realization as one united world, and in its one future in God. This unity is grounded in God's purpose in creating a universe of creatures.

Rahner describes this purpose in his beautiful fundamental concept of divine *self-bestowal*. God creates a universe of creatures in order to give God's self to them in love. Self-bestowal is the meaning of the universe. We human beings have experienced this self-bestowal in the Christ-event and in the experience of the Spirit in grace. In the Word made flesh and the Spirit given in grace, God is revealed as a God of self-bestowing love. Creation is the addressee

of divine self-bestowal. This self-bestowal is already at work in our world in God's creative presence to all things. It will reach its culmination only when the whole of created reality is transfigured in the power of the resurrection and taken up into God.

Rahner sees the incarnation as intrinsic to God's purpose in Creation. While one school of theology has seen the Incarnation primarily as a remedy for human sin, another associated with Franciscan theologians like Raymond Lull and Duns Scotus sees the incarnation as always central to the divine plan in creating a universe of creatures. In this second school of theology, creation was *always* directed towards the Christ-event. God always had the incarnation in mind.[12] Rahner takes up this Franciscan theology and argues that the universe exists only because God was always going to give God's self to Creation in love. This means that the incarnation is not something that comes about primarily because of sin — although in a sinful world it certainly is an event of forgiving grace. The incarnation was always at the centre of the divine plan. For Rahner, creation and incarnation as two distinct parts of the one act of God's self-bestowal to the world. They are two distinct dimensions of one process of divine self-giving. They always belong together.[13]

With this conviction in mind, Rahner begins to develop an evolutionary approach to Christology by pointing to the transitions that occur in evolutionary history. There are times when something radically new emerges, when more comes from less. Key examples are when matter becomes life, and when life comes to self-consciousness in human beings. Rahner insists that the emergence of the new comes about through natural processes that have their own integrity. It is the role of science to explain these processes at the empirical level. But he sees an important role for theology as well, as it needs to account for these processes in terms of the creative act of God. This demands a new development. How can a theology of creation account for the emergence of the new?

In the traditional theology of creation God was seen as holding all creatures in being and as enabling them to act. Rahner finds this theology, important and fundamental as it is, in need of development. In the light of what science tells us about an emergent universe, Creation cannot be thought of as God simply sustaining things in existence. Theology needs to give an account of God's creative act in such a way that it is seen as enabling the universe to *become,* to allow the new and the unpredictable to emerge. God, then, needs to be thought of as empowering the universe from within, in such a way as to enable genuine novelty to emerge. As I pointed out in the last chapter, Rahner calls this Creation's capacity for *self-transcendence.* This is a capacity that the universe and its creatures have within themselves to become. It belongs to the creature, but it is not due to the creature. It springs from the immanent creative presence of God enabling the creature not only to exist but to become what is new. As I proposed in the last chapter, it comes from the Creator Spirit present to each and every entity of the universe.

In Rahner's central idea, God is seen as inspiring and enabling a great pattern of evolutionary emergence whereby matter transcends itself to become life. Life transcends itself in self-conscious human beings; human beings transcend themselves in union with God through grace; and in Jesus of Nazareth, the whole evolutionary process transcends itself radically into God.

From the perspective of Christian faith, the universe can be thought of as carried from the beginning towards a more conscious relationship to its Creator. In human beings, the material universe has become self-conscious. In humanity Creation has come to personhood. As Creation comes to personhood human beings stand before God's self-offering love in the Spirit. As part of the universe, they are invited into an interpersonal relationship with the Creator and can turn back to God in love, thanksgiving and praise.

In Jesus of Nazareth, this movement of grace reaches a moment when one human being is wholly and irreversibly responsive to God's self-giving love. In Jesus, one of us, part of the one universe and its history, is so radically open to and identified with God, that we can rightly say that he *is* the Wisdom of God, the Son of God. Like us, Jesus is the product of biological evolution. Like us, he is made from stardust. Like us, Jesus is inter-related to all other creatures in one global community of Earth. In Jesus, the movement of self-transcendence that has been going on throughout evolutionary history reaches its irreversible climax. In Jesus' complete 'yes' to God, there is a radical and unique self-transcendence of Creation into God.[14]

From the side of Creation, then, the event of Jesus Christ can be understood as the self-transcendence of the created universe into God. From the side of God, Jesus can be seen as God's self-communication to Creation. In Jesus, we find both God's self-giving to the universe and the universe responding in radical creaturely acceptance. Because Jesus is both God's self-communication in our history and Creation's radical 'yes' to God, Rahner sees Jesus as the absolute Saviour.

Jesus is the self-bestowal of God, but this divine self-bestowal occurs from within the evolutionary history of life on our planet. Evolutionary history thus becomes the place of divine revelation. It is embraced by God and taken up into God. In the incarnation within evolutionary history, and above all in the resurrection which is its fulfillment, there is a promise that the history of life is not meaningless and empty. This history can now be seen as occurring because God wants to give God's self to creatures in love. In the Resurrection there is a promise that this evolutionary history and all the creatures that it brings forth are destined to be taken up into God and to find in God their healing and divinizing fulfillment.

In this chapter, I have attempted at describe ways in which the living memory of Jesus can be understood in relationship to ecological commitment. The *starting point* was with Jesus himself, with the memory of Jesus as a wisdom teacher who found God in Creation and who saw God as involved with every sparrow that falls to the ground. At a *second level*, the first Christians see Jesus Risen as the Wisdom of God, as the One in whom all things are created and finally reconciled. At a *third level* of reflection, I turned to the contemporary idea of deep incarnation, the idea that in the Word made flesh, God has embraced the whole interconnected world of biological life. *Finally*, I reflected on Rahner's insight that Jesus can be understood as both the self-transcendence of the evolving universe into God and as God's self-communication to the universe.

As this has made clear, bringing together commitment to Jesus Christ and commitment to Creation is not a novelty in the Christian tradition. It can be grounded at the levels of the living memory of Jesus and of the Wisdom christologies of the early Church. At the same time, recent scientific insights into the evolution of life and the interconnectedness of all life on our planet have led theologians to discover new levels of theological connection between Jesus and ecology, in the concepts of deep incarnation and the self-transcendence of Creation. Each level contributes to the conviction that the following of Jesus in the twenty-first century necessarily involves ecological commitment. This will be taken further in chapter 6 in a theology of the transformation of Creation in Christ. Before then, it will be helpful to explore the trinitarian God revealed in the Christ-event in relation to Creation.

Notes

[1] C.H. Dodd, *The Parable of the Kingdom* (Glasgow: Collins, 1961), 20-21.

[2] This is a theme of Edward Schillebeeckx in his *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Seabury, 1979).

[3] See Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2003).

[4] For a good summary of the evidence see Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John, I-XII* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), cxxii-cxxiii, 519-24.

[5] See for example, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet* (New York: Continuum, 1994).

[6] See Elizabeth Johnson, "Jesus the Wisdom of God: A Biblical Basis for a Non-Androcentric Christology" in *Ephemeredes Theologicae Lovanienses* 41 (1985) 261-94; *She Who Is* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); "Wisdom was Made Flesh and Pitched Her Tent Among Us" in *Reconstructing the Christ Symbol: Essays in Feminist Christology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), edited by Maryanne Stevens, 95-117; "Redeeming the Name of Christ" in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), edited by Catherine LaCugna, 115-37.

[7] I have developed the idea of Wisdom Christology as an ecological theology in *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995).

[8] Duncan Reid, "Enfleshing the Human" in *Earth Revealing – Earth Healing: Ecology and Christian Theology*, edited by Denis Edwards (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), 69-83.

[9] Neil Darragh, *At Home in the Earth* (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2000), 124.

[10] Niels Henrik Gregersen, 'The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World', *Dialogue: A Journal of Theology* 40 (2001), 205.

[11] See Karl Rahner, "Christology within an Evolutionary View of the World," *Theological Investigations* V (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 157-192. See also his *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 178-223.

[12] For this early Franciscan theology, see Ilia Delio, "Revisiting the Franciscan Doctrine of Christ," *Theological Studies* 64 (2003) 3-23.

[13] Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 197.

[14] See Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 178-203.

Denis Edwards

Eucharist and Ecology

How do ecological issues, such as global climate change, impact on our celebrations of the Eucharist? How is eucharistic worship related to ecological action and life-styles? What is it to live an ecological vocation before the God of Jesus Christ? What is the relationship between ecological practice and Christian spirituality? In this last chapter I will attempt a response to these questions, taking up, first, some suggestions for an ecological theology of the Eucharist, and then some reflections on spirituality and praxis.

Towards an Ecological Theology of the Eucharist

The proposal advanced in this section is that, when Christians gather for Eucharist, they bring the Earth and all its creatures, and in some way the whole universe, to the table. I will explore this proposal by working though fives steps: Eucharist as the lifting up of all Creation, as the living memory of both Creation and redemption, as sacrament of the cosmic Christ, as participation with all God's creatures in the Communion of the Trinity, as anticipation of the participation of all God's creatures in the life of the Trinity and as solidarity with the victims of climate change and other ecological crises.

The Lifting Up of All Creation

John Zizioulas, a distinguished theologian and Bishop of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church, has spelled out his ecological theology in a series of lectures given at Kings College London.[1] He argues that the ecological crisis cannot be met simply by arguments based on reason. While these clearly have their place, far more is required. Zizioulas insists that, if we hope to change priorities and life-styles, we will need a different *culture* and a different *ethos*. As a Christian theologian, Zizioulas is convinced that what is needed above all is a *liturgical* ethos. While ecological conversion can be inspired by many other sources as well as Christianity, I think Zizioulas is right in seeing the Christian community as possessing a unique foundation for a radically ecological ethos in its eucharistic spirituality.

Like many Othodox theologians, he sees human beings as called by God to be "priests of Creation." He distinguishes this priestly task from notions of sacrificial priesthood that he associates with mediaeval and Roman Catholic theology. He sees each baptised person as called to be, like Christ, a fully *personal* being. This involves being relational rather than self-enclosed, being able to go out of self to the other, in what he calls *ek-stasis*. People are always ecstatic, in the sense that they achieve personhood only in communion with others. Humans are relational beings. Their vocation is to relate in a fully personal way to God, to other humans and to other creatures of God. According to Zizioulas, humanity and the rest of Creation come to their completion in the life of God through each other.

When humans come to the Eucharist, they bring the fruits of Creation, and in some way the whole Creation, to the eucharistic table. In the East, the central eucharistic prayer is known as the *anaphora*, a word which means the lifting-up. In the Eucharist, the gifts of Creation are *lifted up* to God in offering and thanksgiving, and the Spirit is invoked to transform them, and the assembled community, into the Body of Christ. The exercise of this priesthood is not confined to the ordained but is the God-given role of all the faithful. It is not restricted to liturgical celebrations. It is meant to involve all human

interactions with the rest of Creation. The "lifting up" of Creation is meant to be played out around the planet continually by every human being. Fundamentally this priestly task is nothing other than an authentic personal love for other creatures in all their specificity, a fully human feeling for them and celebration of them in God. Our personal engagement with the rest of Creation, as fully relational beings, is a central dimension of our life before God and salvation in Christ.

The ecological crisis requires the deepest resources of the human community. With Zizioulas, I believe that in the Eucharist Christians have a profound source for an authentically ecological ethos and culture.[2] Christian eucharistic practice, when understood and lived in all its depth, is capable of sustaining an ongoing conversion to a personal and loving stance before the rest of Creation. It does not provide answers to the practical questions that confront us, but it does offer a motivation and a genuinely ecological ethos.[3]

The Living Memory of Both Creation and Redemption

The concept of *anamnesis* is central to eucharistic theology. This Greek word can be translated as a memorial or simply as memory, but I think it is best translated as living memory. In every Eucharist, we remember the events of our salvation in Christ, in such a way that they are made present to us powerfully here and now and anticipate the future transformation of all things in Christ. This kind of memory not only recalls the past but acts powerfully in the present and opens out towards God's future. In the Eucharist, the Christian community naturally focuses on Christ's liberating death and Resurrection, but what is often forgotten is that every Eucharist is a thanksgiving memorial for God at work in Creation as well as in redemption.

Long ago Louis Bouyer pointed out that the early Christian eucharistic prayers had their origins and models in Jewish prayer forms used in synagogues and especially in homes, above all in the Passover meal.[4] These prayers begin with a blessing of the gifts of Creation. They are based on the memory of and thanksgiving for God's work that involves both Creation and salvation. Both Jewish prayer forms and the early Christian eucharistic prayers involve an *anamnesis* of Creation and redemption.[5] Zizioulas makes the same point, insisting that all the ancient eucharistic liturgies began with thanksgiving for *Creation* and then continued with thanksgiving for *redemption* in Christ, and all of them were centred on the lifting up of the gifts of Creation to the Creator.[6]

This is of fundamental importance in a time when human action is radically altering the climate with disastrous effects for human beings and for other creatures on Earth. When we come to the Eucharist we bring the creatures of Earth with us. We remember the God who loves each one of them. We grieve for the damage done to them. We feel with them. We can begin to learn the kind of ethos that Zizioulas speaks of, an ethos that leads to a different way of acting.

This ancient theology is still found in current liturgical texts. In every Eucharist, we begin by bringing Creation to the table, bread and wine, "fruit of the Earth and the work of human hands."[7] Our everyday eucharistic prayers bring out the radical inner relationship between God's action in Creation and redemption: "He is the Word through whom you made the universe, the Saviour you sent to redeem us" (*Second Eucharistic Prayer*). They make it clear that when we come to the Eucharist we bring Creation with us and praise God on behalf of all of Earth's creatures: "All Creation rightly gives you praise" (*Third Eucharistic Prayer*); "In the name of every creature under heaven, we too praise your glory" (*Fourth Eucharistic Prayer*).

In every Eucharist, we remember the events of Christ's life, death and Resurrection and experience their power to bring healing and salvation. We also remember God's good Creation, the 14 billion year history of the universe, the 4.7 billion-year-history of Earth and the emergence of life on Earth in all its diversity and beauty. We remember the vulnerable state of the community of life on Earth today and bring this to God. All of this is caught up in the mystery of Christ celebrated in each of our Eucharists. In the great doxology at the end of the eucharistic prayer, we lift up the whole of Creation through,

with and in Christ, "in the unity of the Holy Spirit" to the eternal praise and glory of God.[8]

Sacrament of the Cosmic Christ

The Christ we encounter in the Eucharist is the Risen One, the one for whom all things were created and through whom all are reconciled (Col 1:15-20). God's eternal wisdom and plan for the fullness of time is "to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10). Even when, in the Eucharist, the focus of the memorial is on Christ's death and Resurrection, this is not a memory that takes us away from Creation. On the contrary, it involves us directly with Creation. It connects us to Earth and all its creatures.

When we remember Christ's death, we remember a creature of our universe, part of the interconnected evolutionary history of our planet, freely handing his whole bodily and personal existence into the mystery of a loving God. When we remember the Resurrection, we remember part of our universe and part of our evolutionary history being taken up in the Spirit into God. This is the beginning of the transformation of the whole Creation in Christ. As Rahner says, this Resurrection of Jesus is not only the *promise* but the *beginning* of the glorification and divinization of the whole of reality.[9]

The Eucharist is the symbol and the sacrament of the Risen Christ who is the beginning of the transfiguration of all creatures in God. In eating and drinking at this table we participate in the Risen Christ (I Cor 10:16-17). Bread and wine are the sacrament of the Christ who is at work in Creation. According to Christian faith, what is symbolized is wonderfully made present. And what is made present is Christ in the power of Resurrection, as not only the promise but also the beginning of the transformation of all things. Every Eucharist is both sign and agent of the transforming work of the Risen Christ in the whole of Creation.

I believe that this kind of sacramental theology is the context for interpreting for today the prayer of Teilhard de Chardin in his *Mass on the World*:

> All the things in the world to which this day will bring increase; all those that will diminish; all those too that will die: all of them, Lord, I try to gather into my arms, so as to hold them out to you in offering. This is the material of my sacrifice; the only material you desire.[10]

> Over every living thing which is to spring up, to grow, to flower, to ripen during this day say again the words: This is my Body. And over every death-force which waits in readiness to corrode, to wither, to cut down, speak again your commanding words which express the supreme mystery of faith: This is my Blood.[11]

As Teilhard's prayer unfolds, he sees the power of God at work in Christ and present in the Eucharist as transforming the Earth from within. Because the Word is made flesh, no part of the physical universe is untouched. All matter is the place of God. All is being divinized. All is being transformed in Christ: "Through your own incarnation, my God, all matter is henceforth incarnate."[12] Because of this, Earth, the solar system and the whole universe become the place for encounter with the risen Christ: "Now, Lord, through the consecration of the world, the luminosity and fragrance which suffuse the universe take on for me the lineaments of a body and a face — in you."

The Eucharist is an effective prayer for the transformation of the universe in Christ. It points towards and anticipates the divinization of the universe in Christ. The one we encounter

sacramentally in the Eucharist is the One for whom all things were created and through whom all will be transfigured. Human action, which is an expression of love and respect for the living creatures, the atmosphere, the seas and the land of our planet, can be seen as not only in continuity with, but also as in some way part of the work of the eucharistic Christ. Wilfully contributing to the destruction of species, or to pumping more and more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, cannot but be seen as a denial of Christ. It is a denial of the meaning of all that we celebrate when we gather for Eucharist.

Participating With All God's Creatures in the Communion of the Trinity

Every Eucharist is an eschatological event, meaning that it is an event of the Spirit that anticipates the future when all things will be taken up into divine Communion. The Eucharist is profoundly trinitarian. Our eucharistic communion, our communion with each other in Christ, is always a sharing in and a tasting of the divine Communion of the Trinity, in which all things will be transfigured and find their eternal meaning and their true home. This trinitarian Communion which we share is the source of all life on Earth; it is what enables a community of life to emerge and evolve; and, in ways that are beyond our imagination and comprehension, it is what will be the fulfillment of all the creatures of our planet, and all the wonders of our universe. As we participate in the Eucharist, we taste in anticipation the fulfillment of all things taken up into the divine life of the Trinity.

This means, as Tony Kelly has said, that the "most intense moment of our communion with God is at the same time an intense moment of our communion with the earth."[13] By being taken up into God, we are caught up into God's love for the creatures of our planetary community. This begins to shape our ecological imagination: "The Eucharist educates the imagination, the mind, and the heart to apprehend the universe as one of communion and connectedness in Christ." In this eucharistic imagination, a distinctive ecological vision and commitment can take shape,[14] leading to an ecological ethos, culture and praxis. With this kind of authentic eucharistic imagination at work in us, we can see the other creatures of Earth as our kin, as radically interconnected with us in one Earth community of life before God. We can begin to see more clearly what is happening to the Earth. We are led to to participate in God's feeling for the life-forms of our planet.

Solidarity with Victims

The Eucharist always involves the memory of the Cross. The theologian Johannes Metz speaks of this as a "dangerous" memory.[15] The Cross of Jesus is an abiding challenge to all complacency before the suffering of others. It brings those who suffer to the very centre of Christian faith. It challenges the self-serving and ideological justifications of the misery of the poor and the victims of war, oppression and natural disasters. The Resurrection offers a dynamic vision of hope for the suffering of the world, but it does not dull the memory of the suffering, who are always present, forever imaged in the wounds of the Risen Christ.

This dangerous and critical memory provides an alternative way of seeing and acting. It leads to solidarity, to alternative life-styles and to personal and political action. The World Council of Churches, in its reflections on solidarity with victims of climate change, points to the many communities of people, especially in the Southern hemisphere, who are particularly vulnerable to climate change: "Though their *per capita* contribution to the causes of climate change is negligible, the will suffer from the consequences to a much larger degree."[16] Climate change and other aspects of our ecological crisis aggravate the social and economic injustice between rich and poor in our global community. To contribute to this destruction of lives, of homes, of livelihoods and of communities "is not only a sin against the weak and unprotected but also against the earth — God's gift of life."[17]

The Eucharist, as a living memory of all those who suffer, calls the Christian community to a new solidarity that involves all the human victims as well as the animals and plants that are destroyed or threatened. Solidarity involves personal and political commitment to both

of the two strategies that have been identified as responses to climate change, those of *mitigation* and *adaptation*. Adaptation will mean re-ordering society, budgeting in readiness for ecological disasters, training personnel and allocating resources. In a particular way it will involve, as a matter of justice, hospitality to environmental refugees.

When we Australian Christians gather for eucharistic celebrations, we gather in solidarity with Christians who assemble for Eucharist in Kiribas, in Tuvalu, and in Bangladesh. We gather in solidarity with those who share other forms of religious faith in the Pacific, in South-East Asia, in Africa, and in all parts of our global community. We remember those already displaced from their homes and heritage. We cannot but be painfully aware of the threat to many millions of other people. We are challenged to be mindful of Australia's contribution to the greenhouse effect, of our wealth created by coal, of our use of motor vehicles. We pray in solidarity with the global community, that the Eucharist that brings us into peace and communion with God, may "advance the peace and salvation of all the world" (*Third Eucharistic Prayer*). We commit ourselves again to discipleship, to an ecological ethos, lifestyle, politics and praxis, as people of Easter hope.

Peter Scott has said that in the Eucharist, "the eucharistic community is bound in sociality to the wider ecological society, and interprets and clarifies it." He describes the Eucharist as an event of divine hospitality and points out that this hospitality "has no ecclesiastical restrictions, and encompasses the non-human."[18] He sees the Eucharist as a powerful political resource that Christianity offers to an ecological age. In every Eucharist, we gather in one place with all our ordinariness and limitations. We take up the fruits of the earth and the work of human hands. We encounter Jesus, in all the healing, liberating love poured out in his life and death and know again his presence as the Risen One transforming all things from within. In the power of the Spirit, we participate in and taste the eschatological Communion of the Trinity. In the Spirit, the assembly is made one in Christ, in a communion in God that has no borders, but reaches out to embrace all of God's creatures. Every Eucharist calls us to ecological conversion and action.

Spirituality and Practice

Conversion is central to Christian life. It is never something that is done. It always appears before us again as an invitation and a grace offered in the new circumstances that we face. As Brennan Hill says, "Christian spirituality is a journey on the earth that constantly calls for conversion and maturing."[19] This book has been an extended argument that the following of Jesus in the twenty-first century will involve ongoing ecological conversion. The scope and intensity of the ecological crisis challenge us in a radical way. No other generation has had to face up to human-induced global climate change, and the knowledge that their action or inaction will determine the future of life on the planet. And, as Sean McDonagh points out, no other generation has had to accept responsibility for the survival of the biodiversity of the planet:

> The task quite simply is to take decisive action to stave off the extinction of species which could sterilise the planet. If this generation does not act, no future generation will be able to undo the damage that this generation has caused to the planet. It is an extraordinary and awesome moment that the behaviour of a single generation of humans can have such a profound and irreversible impact, not just on human history, but on the life of the planet as well.[20]

The ecological conversion to which we are called involves a new way of seeing, thinking and acting. Whether one's meaning system be that of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Indigenous Australian religious traditions, or some form of humanism, the state of the planet is a challenge to a profound conversion that involves mind and heart, life-style and politics. I suspect that each of the great religious traditions has within itself resources for this work of ongoing conversion, and I believe that it demands a response from all of our traditions and

collaboration between all of them. My hope is that this book might function as a partial sketch of how this work of ecological conversion can find inspiration from within the tradition of Christian faith, as part of this wider conversation.

The Way of Wisdom

Those who understand their lives as a following of Jesus see him not only as the one who lived in Galilee two thousand years ago, proclaiming the compassion of God and the coming Reign of God in word and deed, but also as the Wisdom of God, the eternal Word made flesh, the crucified and Risen One who is the beginning of the transformation of the whole Creation. I am proposing that discipleship of Jesus means following the way of wisdom and that this involves loving respect for all of God's creatures. I will not attempt an ecological ethics from the perspective of Wisdom, something taken up by Celia Deane-Drummond in a number of works,[21] but simply sketch a theological approach to ecological praxis.

Paul not only sees Jesus crucified as the true wisdom of God (I Cor 1:24,30), but he also sees human beings as participating in true wisdom, because in Christ they find the revelation of God's hidden purpose in Creation (I Cor 2:7-10). We humans can possess wisdom, but it comes as a gift, the gift of the Spirit who "searches everything, even the depths of God" (I Cor 2:10). In Ephesians we read: "with all wisdom and insight God has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, to gather up all things in himself, things in heaven and on earth" (Eph 1:8-10). Wisdom is "the plan of the mystery hidden for all ages in God who created all things" (Eph 3:9-10). We participate in this divine wisdom by an enlightening of the "eyes of the heart" that allows us to know the hope to which we are called (Eph 1:18). The basis of this hope is the Risen Christ at work in the universe beyond all cosmic powers (Eph 1:22-23).[22]

The way of wisdom involves both enlightenment and action. It is an enlightenment that bears fruit in action. Enlightenment springs from the hope we possess that all will be taken up and transfigured in the Risen Christ. It is a seeing and valuing of all things in relation to Christ and faithful action in the light of this. To follow Jesus-Wisdom is to see every sparrow as held and loved by God. It is also to see every sparrow and every great soaring tree as created in the Wisdom of God that is made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. To live in wisdom, in the full Christian sense, means seeing the whole of Creation as coming forth from the dynamic abundance of the Trinity, as evolving within the dynamism of the life of the Three, and as destined to find fulfilment in this shared life.

Bonaventure tells us that every creature is "nothing less than a kind of representation of the wisdom of God."[23] He sees each creature as a work of art produced by the divine Artist and as reflecting this Artist: "Every creature is of its nature a likeness and resemblance to eternal wisdom".[24] The human practice of true wisdom, then, involves seeing each creature in its relationship to its eternal origin and destiny. This way of seeing specific creatures in God is what Bonaventure calls "contuition." It is important to note that this is not a by-passing of the specificity and particularity of the individual creature, but an embracing of each in its uniqueness and in its unique relationship to the living God.

The way of wisdom can be understood as the way of loving knowledge, of "knowledge thought love."[25] It is the fruit of the Spirit of love at work in us. To act wisely is not only to act in accord with all the available empirical evidence, but also to act in a way that is at one with the gift of the Spirit breathing through Creation and breathing love in us. Loving knowledge is the kind of knowing we have of a beloved friend. It is not a love that claims to comprehend or to control the other, but recognizes the other, even in the intimacy of deep friendship, as an abiding mystery. This kind of loving knowledge is the essential foundation for ecological practice. It is a stance before reality that challenges the absolute claims made by the economics of the free market on the one hand and by certain forms of science and technology on the other. There are, of course, times when we need to struggle to comprehend what confronts us whether it be

in mathematics, biology, economics, politics or theology. But the knowledge that seeks and claims comprehension and control can be a dangerous knowledge. It needs to be situated within a fundamental stance before reality that recognizes the limits of what we can claim to know, that accepts the mystery of the other in humility.

There is a wisdom saying of Jesus that speaks of the importance of a sound eye: "The eye is the lamp of the body. So if the eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness" (Mt 6:22). A sound eye, seeing things rightly, is of the essence of the way of wisdom. Sallie McFague contrasts the "arrogant eye" with the "loving eye." The arrogant eye is characteristic of the typical Western attitude to the natural world. It objectifies, manipulates, uses and exploits. The loving eye does not come automatically to us. It requires training and discipline to see things with a loving eye. McFague points out that the loving eye requires detachment in order to see the difference, distinctiveness and the uniqueness of the other. Too often we imagine we know who or what the other is, instead of taking the trouble to find out. McFague writes:

> This is the eye trained in detachment in order that its attachment will be objective, based on the reality of the other and not on its own wishes or fantasies. This is the eye bound to the other as is an apprentice to a skilled worker, listening to the other as does a foreigner in a new country. This is the eye that pays attention to the other so that the connections between knower and known, like the bond of friendship, will be on the real subject in its real world.[26]

What is required is that we learn to love others, human and non-human, with a love that involves both distance and intimacy. This involves cultivating a loving eye that respects difference. This is the way of wisdom, a way of seeing each creature in relation to God, as a unique manifestation of divine Wisdom, as embraced by God in the Incarnation and destined to share in the redemption of all things in Christ.

Praxis in the Spirit

The way of wisdom involves praxis — the combination of active engagement and ongoing reflection that is at the heart of all liberation theology. Conversion to the Earth, to solidarity with the creatures that make up our planetary community, must involve action. It is not only a radical reorientation of thought, nor is it only the discovery of a new capacity for feeling for non-human Creation. It is both of these issuing forth in personal, political and ecclesial action.

To follow Jesus means being led by the Spirit as he was Spirit-led at every stage of his journey. This involves a truly personal discernment but it is never an individualistic one. The Spirit of God is always the Spirit of communion, communion with our human sisters and brothers and communion with the whole of Creation. It is not difficult to see the Spirit at work in some great movements of our times — the ecological movement, the movement seeking justice and peace above all for the poor of the Earth, and the feminist movement seeking the full equality of women. In spite of all the human failures and sin that play a role in these movements, they are places where the Spirit of God is powerfully at work, calling us to play our own part in these as movements of liberation and hope.

To be led by the Spirit at the beginning of the twenty-first century is to be involved with what Thomas Berry describes as the "Great Work." This Great Work is to carry out the transition from "a period of human devastation of the Earth" to a period when humans will "be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner."[27] To make this transition will mean expanding our moral community. David Toolan says that "we need to expand our moral concern to include plants, animals, air and water and soils." We need to recognize that we are one species among others, but, at the same time, we must accept responsibility for the future of the planet: "leaving nature alone is simply not a viable option."[28] Morality must now mean accepting responsibility for climate change, for the state of the fisheries and the future of the Earth's rain forests.

Toolan locates this ethical challenge in the deeper place of the human being's role in the emerging universe and in the evolutionary history of life on Earth. It is as if the stardust in our DNA, the microbes that swim in our cells, the bacteria that gave us a breathable atmosphere all now wait upon human beings to finish the great cosmic symphony. It is only with us, with *Homo sapiens*, that the atoms born in stars can become mindful of the meaning of things, so that they can begin to decipher "the mystery hidden from the foundation of the world."[29] Toolan says that human beings are called to give soul to the universe:

> We are great mothering nature's soul-space, her heart and vocal chords — and her willingness, if we consent to it, to be spirited, to be the vessel of the Holy One whose concern reaches out to embrace all that is created. When we fail in this soul-work, fail in extending our own reach of concern, nature fails/falls with us. But when it happens, when we say yes to the Spirit who hovers over our inner chaos, the mountains clap their hands, the hills leap like gazelles. They and the quarks have a big stake in us.[30]

Human creatures are the ones who can consciously give praise, who can lift up Creation to God in love. As Sean McDonagh, one of the prophets of ecological praxis, says, "our unique human vocation is to celebrate the beauty and fruitfulness of all life on Earth."[31] Christian ecological action is grounded in celebration: in the Eucharist. But it issues forth in personal and political action. Paul Santmire reclaims the tradition of the martyrs for ecological theology, pointing out that to be a martyr means to be a witness. He sees the Church of today, empowered and driven by the Spirit, as challenged to rise to the occasion of these times — as martyrs in other eras rose to the occasions that were thrust upon them. The challenge is to allow the love of God in Christ Jesus "so to pour into our hearts by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that it overflows abundantly, not only to persons, especially to those in great need, by also to the other creatures of nature." We need a new form of the martyr church:

> How then will this martyr church in the ecological and cosmic age love nature? Passionately and persistently and pervasively. We Christians will be a voice for the voiceless, for the sake of all creatures of nature who have no voice in human affairs. We will listen to the plaintive cries of the great whales and hear the groaning of the rain forests, and we will be their advocates in the village squares and in the courts of power, by the grace of God. All the more will we hear the bitter wailing of the little children who live on the trash mountains of this world and who wear clothes that have been washed in streams overflowing with heinous poisons and who sometimes drink these very waters.[32]

The witness of the Christian community will be carried out in workplaces, in neighbourhoods and in homes, and sometimes in political and activist groups. It can and must be lived in the very way we go about our daily lives, in every trade and profession and in every home. Very often the praxis of individual Christians will be done in collaboration with others far removed from the life of the Church. But, as I think Santmire is suggesting, there is also a place for ecclesial action where the Church itself witnesses in the public arena through it structures of leadership.

Two recent simple examples of this come to mind. On World Ocean Day, 8th June 2004, the seven Catholic Bishops of the state of Queensland in Australia issued a Pastoral Letter on the threatened and damaged Great Barrier Reef. They celebrate the reef, with its coral trout, huge gropers, sea snakes, large green turtles, humpback whales, sea grasses, sea fern, sponges and anemones as a beautiful gift of God that arouses wonder, gratitude and praise. They assess the serious dangers facing the reef and call their people to take responsibility for its survival and its health.[33] Then, on the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, 4th October 2004, eleven Bishops of the Murray-Darling Basin endorsed a statement of Catholic Earthcare Australia that supports political action on salinity and increased river flow and call for

commitment to conserving and re-using water.[34] What is important about these examples (and a number of others from around the world), is that: **1.** the response is local, involving local church leaders taking a position on ecological issues that arise in their own bioregion, and **2.** in adopting political options, such as increased environmental river flow, the Bishops are defending not only the good of human beings, but also explicitly extending their moral commitment and advocacy to include the animals, plants and fish of the Murray-Darling Basin and the Great Barrier Reef.

Listening to the Spirit may well lead Christian believers to get involved in political action through activist and lobbying groups. In my view, it will certainly involve a critical challenge to the dominant economic and political model based on market forces and endless consumption. It will mean accepting that the resources of the Earth are finite, that current Western consumption patterns cannot be sustained by the wider human community, or into future generations, and that they bring death and destruction to other species in our planetary community of life. It will mean personal and political options in support of renewable sources of energy, alternative forms of transport, the conservation and re-use of water, the designing of energy-efficient buildings, the protection of habitats, the limitation of urban sprawl, and the attempt to bring life and beauty to our cities. It many instances, it will mean living more consciously and more fully in a local area, in a particular bioregion, and in a local human community with its local businesses and its local life.

A Mysticism of Ecological Praxis

To be converted to a sense of kinship with and responsibility for the creatures of Earth, and for the land, atmosphere, seas and rivers that support them, can be a joyful and liberating experience. Getting involved with the struggle for a more just and ecologically sustainable world can be fulfilling and meaningful, an experience of communion with other human beings and with the natural world. It may involve the experience of success, a habitat saved, a conservation park established, an international protocol on carbon emissions accepted, but it will certainly also involve suffering and the experience of failure. This can lead to a sense of hopelessness, because of the sheer power of the economic and political forces that are committed to maximum short-term profits with no regard for ecological or social consequences.

Christian hope is based on God, on God's self-bestowal in Christ, and the promise that all is taken up in Christ and will be transfigured in him. Our own commitments, our own actions, our successes and our failures will become the raw material for this final transformation. Saving species, saving habitats matters before God. Our struggles have final and eternal meaning. Individual creatures have final meaning before God.

This meaning, this promise matters greatly in the midst of our commitments and actions. But more is needed if hope is to be kept alive. We need to be anchored in the promise of God as a matter of experience. We need to be mystics. Karl Rahner has said a number of times that the Christian of the future will be a mystic or he/she will cease to be anything at all.[35] Of course, what Rahner has in mind is not mysticism understood as some form of visionary or trance-like experience. And he is not thinking primarily of the experience of quiet, contemplative prayer before God — although this is certainly part of the picture. What he has in mind is what he calls the "the mysticism of everyday life."[36] He believes that, by God's grace, there is an experience of God that occurs in

every life, and at the heart of life, whether this be noticed and named or not. It may occur in the deep unquenchable longing of the heart, in the quest for answers that opens up more and more questions, in the experience of truly radical commitment to a cause, in the utter pain of loss and grief where something enables us to endure and go on, in small acts of love that spring from a radical commitment of oneself. In such experiences there is an openness to mystery, to the transcendent, that Christians call the experience of grace. In the light of Christian revelation we can see this as the place of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can open our beings to the One who is silently present at the centre of our experience. This is the mysticism of daily life.

What I think we need for the twenty-first century is what might be called a mysticism of ecological praxis. The liberation theologians of the twentieth century and their European counterparts came to recognize that Christians committed to the cause of political liberation need to be both political and mystical. It is only the mystical that can enable us to hope against hope, to act with integrity and love in the political and the personal spheres in times of adversity and failure, up to and including death. Edward Schillebeeckx sums up this when he says that authentic faith, or the mystical, seems in modern times "to be nurtured above all in and through the praxis of liberation." In this experience there grows the awareness that God is revealed as "the deepest mystery, the heart and the soul of any truly human liberation."[37] He points out that the political form of love of God and neighbour knows the same need for repentance and conversion, the same asceticism, the same suffering and dark nights, as is the case in contemplative mysticism.[38] He says: "Without prayer or mysticism politics soon becomes cruel and barbaric. Without political love, prayer or mysticism soon becomes sentimental or uncommitted interiority."[39]

The challenge to find the living God in solidarity with the poor of the Earth remains an enormous challenge for Christian faith in this coming century. The argument of this book is that commitment to the poor and commitment to the well-being of life on this planet must go together as two interrelated dimensions of the one Christian vocation. Ecological conversion is not opposed to, but intimately involved with, conversion to the side of the poor. And ecological conversion, like conversion to the side of the poor, will need to involve both the political and the mystical, and the discovery of the mystical precisely in the political.

What then would a mysticism of ecological praxis look like? I would suggest that it might embrace some of these kinds of experiences:

The experience of being caught up in the utter beauty of the natural world, when this leads to a wonder and a joy that seem boundless.

The experience of being part of a 14 billion-year-history of the universe, and part of a 3.8 billion-year-history of the evolution of life on Earth, and of knowing all this as directed to God's self-bestowal in love.

The experience of being overwhelmed by natural forces, by the size and age of the universe, of knowing the natural world as other, of feeling it as alien, and in this being taken far beyond human comfort zones into mystery.

The experience of being called to solidarity with the creatures of Earth, of being called to an ecological conversion, of coming to know other creatures as kin, and of knowing this as the gracious gift of the Spirit of God.

The experience of being overwhelmed by the size of the ecological problem, of being defeated by powerful economic forces, of seeing rain forest further destroyed, more species go extinct, more carbon pumped into the atmosphere, of feeling near despair, but still hoping against hope, of knowing this as a participation in the way of this cross, as an invitation to commit ourselves to go on, entrusting ourselves and our damaged Earth into the hands of God.

The experience of conversion from the model of individualism and consumption to the simplicity of what Sallie McFague calls "life abundant" and knowing in this the truth of God: where what matters are the basic necessities of food, clothes and shelter, medical care, educational opportunities, loving relationships, meaningful work, an enriching imaginative

and spiritual life, time with friends, and time spent with the natural world around us.[40]

The experience of commitment to the creatures of our Earth community, that takes us beyond our tendencies to self-righteousness and self-satisfaction, that has the character of a life-long, in fact, an eternal commitment, which we can recognize as sheer grace.

Notes

* *Ecology at the Heart of Faith* (Maryknoll : Orbis, 2006).

[1] John Zizioulas, "Preserving God's Creation: Three Lectures on Ecology and Theology," *King's Theological Review* 12 (1989), 1-5, 41-45 and 13 (1990), 1-5.

[2] On this see Partricia A. Fox, *God as Communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson, and the Retrieval of the Symbol of God* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2001), 70.

[3] Zizioulas says: "All this involves an *ethos* that the world needs badly in our time. Not an ethic, but an *ethos*. Not a programme, but an attitude and a mentality. Not legislation, but a culture." See his "Preserving God's Creation," *King's Theological Review* 13 (1990), 5.

[4] Louis Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 15-28.

[5] *Ibid*, 132.

[6] Zizioulas, "Preserving God's Creation," *King's Theological Review* 12 (1989), 4.

[7] For the sake of brevity, I will restrict my examples to current Roman Catholic liturgical texts. Further examples can be found in the liturgical texts and hymns of other Christian communities.

[8] See Yves Congar's remarks on the doxology in his *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Volume II (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), 224.

[9] Karl Rahner, "Dogmatic Questions on Easter," *Theological Investigations* IV (New York, Seabury Press, 1974), 129.

[10] Teilhard, Teilhard de Chardin, "The Mass on the World," in *Hymn of the Universe* (London: Collins, 1965), 20. On this see Thomas M. King, *Teilhard's Mass: Approaches to "The Mass on the World"* (New York: Paulist, 2005). See also Mary Grey "Cosmic Communion: A Contemporary Reflection on the Eucharistic Vision of Teilhard de Chardin," *Ecotheology* 10 (2005): 165-80.

[11] Teilhard, *The Mass on the World*, 23.

[12] Teilhard, *The Mass on the World*, 24.

[13] Tony Kelly, *The Bread of God: Nurturing a Eucharistic Imagination* (Melbourne: HarperCollins, 2001), 92.

[14] Kelly, *The Bread of God*, 100-1.

[15] Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Towards a Practical Fundamental Theology* (London: Burns and Oates, 1980), 109.

[16] *Solidarity with Victims of Climate Change: Reflections on the World Council of Churches' Response to Climate Change* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2002), 10.

[17] *Solidarity with Victims*, 10.

[18] Peter Scott, *A Political Theology of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 246.

[19] Brennan R. Hill, Christian Faith and the Environment: Making Vital Connections (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 267.

[20] Sean McDonagh, The Death of Life: The Horror of Extinction (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2004), 151.

[21] Celia E. Deane-Drummond, *Creation through Wisdom: Theology and the New Biology* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 2000); *The Ethics of Nature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). While I recognize that Wisdom can refer to a divine attribute possessed by all three trinitarian persons, my approach is focused on Wisdom as a way of speaking of the eternal hypostasis that is made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth,. See Denis Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecological Theology* (Marynoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995).

[22] In Colossians we are told that all the treasures of the wisdom of God are found in Christ (Col 2:3). True wisdom is to be filled with the knowledge of God's promise so as to lead lives worthy of the Risen Christ and to bear fruit in good work (Col:1:9-10).

[23] Bonaventure, *Hexaemeron*, 12.

[24] *Ibid*, 2.12.

[25] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.43.5 *ad* 2.

[26] Sallie McFague, *Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 116.

[27] Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 2.
[28] David Toolan, *At Home in the Cosmos* (Maryknoll, Orbis, 2001), 236.
[29] *Ibid*, 215.
[30] *Ibid*.
[31] Sean McDonagh, *The Death of Life*, 150.
[32] H. Paul Santmire, *Nature Reborn: The Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 119-120.
[33] *Let the Many Coastlands Be Glad: A Pastoral Letter on the Great Barrier Reef by the Catholic Bishops of Queensland* (Sydney: Catholic Earthcare Australia, 2004).
[34] *The Gift of Water: A Statement from Catholic Earthcare Australia endorsed by Bishops of the Murray-Darling Basin* (Sydney: Catholic Earthcare Australia, 2004).
[35] See, for example, Karl Rahner, "Christian Living Formerly and Today," *Theological Investigations* 7 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 15.
[36] On all this see Harvey D. Egan, *Karl Rahner: Mystic of Everyday Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), especially pages 55-79.
[37] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in Our Western Cultures: Mysticism, Ethics and Politics* (London: SCM, 1987), 73.
[38] Brennan Hill discusses how ecological commitment involves a return to an ancient Christian tradition of self-denial in a new form of asceticism: "Environmental concerns bring new light to the discussion of authentic self-denial. No doubt we will all have to live more simply if we wish to share our resources, replenish them, and share them with those in need. The new asceticism returns to natural foods that are nourishing and healthy, and it sets aside the processed and "fast foods" that are harmful to health and wasteful in their excessive packaging. This spirituality returns to making things, and repairing, patching, and refinishing rather than simply discarding. Such self-denial calls for a detachment from gadgets, faddish items, and luxuries. It is conscientious about adequate exercise and proper health care." Brennan R. Hill, *Christian Faith and the Environment,* 249.
[39] *Ibid*, 75.
[40] Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 209-210.

Denis Edwards

Final Fulfilment: The Deification of Creation

If the great scientific discovery of the nineteenth century was Darwin's discovery of the evolution of life by means of natural selection, equally significant was the twentieth century discovery that our universe is not static but expanding dynamically. The universe itself is evolving. We now know that the observable universe began from an unthinkably small, hot and dense state 13.7 billion years ago, that bacterial life began on Earth about 3.8 billion years ago and that all the wonderfully diverse forms of life of our planet have evolved from this beginning.

In this chapter I will explore a theology of final fulfilment after Darwin and after Einstein and Hubble. For the purpose of this exploration, I will assume rather than argue for a position on the promise of redemption for human beings: that redemption in Christ involves the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit that makes us sons and daughters of God, transforms us in Christ, restores and renews in us the image of God, and is the promise and the beginning of our participation in resurrection life, in the communion of the Trinity; that ultimately our final salvation as human beings is about communion, our communion in the dynamic life of the triune God, with other human persons in the communion of saints, and in some way with the whole of God's Creation.

The question I will take up is centred on the rest of Creation: What does final fulfilment mean for non-human creatures? The focus will be on the way in which the wider Creation can be thought to share in resurrection life. I will start from the assumption of Christian faith in the bodily and personal resurrection of humans and will ask how the rest of Creation might be thought of as participating with humans in resurrection life. While I recognize, that there is much that is controversial about the resurrection of human beings, I will not address these issues here.

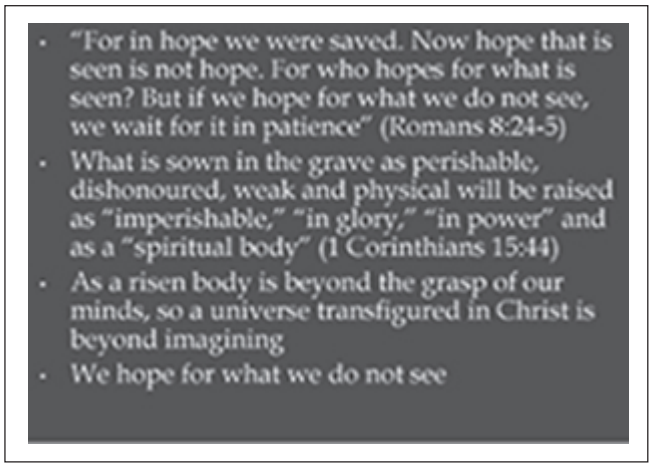
The guiding thought in this exploration is that in the incarnation God has embraced not just humanity, and not just the whole world of flesh, but the whole universe and all its dynamic history, and that this embrace constitutes an unbreakable promise. As Walter Kasper has put it: "God has accepted the whole world finally in Jesus Christ, and God is faithful, so the world and history will not simply vanish into nothingness, rather God will be its 'all in all' in the end (I Cor 15:28)" (Kasper, 1986, 378).

I will begin with what I take to be fundamental in this kind of discussion, an acknowledgment of what we do not know of God's future. Then, with this in place, I will take up the promise of hope for Creation found in the New Testament, particularly in Paul's Letter to the Romans, and in patristic theology, exemplified in St Maximus Confessor. This will lead to an exploration of insights from Karl Rahner's theology of hope for the material universe. Then, in the final section, I will take up and explore hope for the animals, arguing that they too share in their own way in the final transformation and deification of all things.

We Hope For What We Do Not See: God as Absolute Future

At the end of the section from Romans that I will discuss below, Paul writes: "For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it in patience" (Rom 8:24-5). Christian hope for the resurrection of the body and a renewed Creation is not something we can see or imagine, because what we see is the empirical reality that surrounds us and what

we can imagine is based upon what we already experience. Again, according to Paul, God's transforming act in resurrection involves a radical change in bodily existence. What is sown in the grave as perishable, dishonoured, weak and physical will be raised as "imperishable," "in glory," "with power" and as a "spiritual body" (*cf.* I Cor 15:42,44). As a risen body is beyond the grasp of our minds, so a universe transfigured in Christ is beyond imagining. We hope for what we do not see.



A critical Christian theology approaches discussions of God's future for our world with caution. It is all too aware of what we do not know. In fact, it insists, there are serious theological reasons that put limits on what we can claim to know. These reasons were articulated by Karl Rahner in a well-known article in the mid-twentieth century (Rahner, 1966, 323-46). In his work two fundamental principles can be found which can guide the interpretation of eschatological statements. **The first** is that *the future of our world in God remains radically hidden to us*. The Scriptures insist that God has not revealed the day when the end will come (Mk 13:32), and it is not simply the timing of the end that is hidden. The future has been announced and promised in Christ and his Resurrection, but it is announced and promised precisely as hidden mystery. This future is nothing else than the coming towards us of the incomprehensible God. It is God who is our Absolute Future. The revelation of God's promise in Christ does not mean that what was unknown is now made known, clear and manageable. It is rather "the dawn and the approach of mystery as such" (330). Because the future is the coming of God, it always escapes our comprehension. It is always a mistake, then, to interpret biblical images in literal terms as something like an "eyewitness" account of what is to come.

The second principle is that *the future will be the fulfilment of the salvation in Christ that is already given to us.* It will be the fulfilment of what we experience in God's self-communication in Christ and in the grace of the Holy Spirit. Our knowledge of God's future is based upon what can be derived from what we experience in Christ and from what we can see as its fulfilment. We do not have supplementary knowledge of the eschatological future over and above what we have in the theology of Christ and of grace, but we can transpose these to their fulfilment. This means that all genuine theological knowledge of the future is an inner moment of the eschatological present.

For the Christian, who views the future as God's self-bestowal, the future is truly unknown and uncontrollable, and this is something that leaves a great deal of room for freedom, for hope and for trust. Of course, we are inescapably tied to our imaginations and images have their proper place in expressing religious ideas. But it is fundamental not to mistake the image for the reality. The image might be the great wedding feast, or Paul's angelic trumpet or Matthew's sheep and goats. But the reality that the images point to is based upon the experience we have of the grace of Christ already at work in us and drawing us into a future in God.

For Rahner, the absolute future is nothing else that God's self-bestowal. This is the consummation of the divine action of Creation and redemption, a fulfilment promised and initiated in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus. Christianity proclaims that the becoming of the universe will end, not in emptiness, but in the divine self-bestowal. Moreover, this absolute future is already at work within history. It is already the divine creative power at work in all things, the Creator Spirit immanent in every aspect of Creation, bringing the universe to its fulfilment. The absolute future, this divine self-bestowal, has found its explicit and irreversible expression in Jesus. His Resurrection is both the promise and the beginning

of the absolute future, the transformation of human beings and the whole of the universe in Christ. "Absolute future" is another name for God. This absolute future not only comes towards us as the future of our world, but is also "the sustaining ground of the dynamism towards the future" (Rahner, 1969, 62). This is the God who is the absolutely incomprehensible mystery of love from which Creation comes and to which it is directed.

- Some Christians see salvation as focused on the individual, sometimes on the soul
- The biblical notion: resurrection, coming of the Reign of God, communion with others in God, and the transformation of creation
- Genesis – Revelation
- Biblical hope is for a forgiven and renewed humanity within a transformed creation
- The peaceable animals: Isaiah 11:6-9; 43:19-21; 55:12-13, Ezekiel 34:25-31, Hosea 2:18; Zechariah 8:12; Micah 4:4
- A "new heavens and a new earth": Isaiah 65:17; 66:22

Hope for the Whole Creation in the New Testament: Romans 8:18-25

For some Christians, the concept of salvation is centred on the individual human person, and sometimes simply on the individual human soul. The biblical notion, by contrast is of the resurrection of the body, the coming of the Reign of God, communion with others in the life of the Trinity, and the transformation of the whole Creation. In the Bible, human beings are understood in relationship to each other and in relation to the wider Creation. The biblical narrative begins with God creating all the diverse creatures of our universe and declaring them to be good. After the terrible destruction caused by human sin, God makes a solemn Covenant not only with Noah and his family, but with every living creature and declares that the sign of this Covenant with every creature of flesh will be the rainbow (Gn 9:16). The Bible concludes with a vision of a new heaven and new earth, a transformed world, a place where God dwells with God's people, a place of healing and life, where the leaves of the tree of life, growing alongside the river of life, are for "the healing of nations" (Rv 22:2).

Biblical hope is for a forgiven and renewed humanity within a transformed Creation. It finds expression in the famous image of the peaceable animals, where the wolf lives with the lamb, the lion eats straw like an ox, and children play safely near snakes and God proclaims: "They will not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Is 11:6-9). This promise occurs in a series of prophetic texts (Is 43:19-21; 55:12-13, Ez 34:25-31, Hos 2:18; Zc 8:12; Mic 4:4) and appears in the divine commitment to create "new heavens and a new earth" (Is 65:17; 66:22).

The New Testament sees the Resurrection of Jesus as involving the whole Creation. Jesus Risen from the dead, is the Wisdom and Word of God, the one in whom all things are created and sustained (*cf.* I Cor 8:6; Heb 1:2-3; Jn 1:1-14). He is the One in whom all things are to be redeemed, recapitulated and reconciled (Rom 8:18-25; Col 1:15-20; Eph 1:9-10; 20-23). The Risen Christ is the beginning of the new Creation, the promised new heavens and new earth (II Pt 3:13; Rv 21:1-5; 22:13). In this new Creation, every creature of earth, sky and sea will sing praise to the Lamb who has redeemed the whole Creation (*cf.* Rv 5:13-14). Each of these texts contributes an important element to an overall understanding of the divine promise in relation to the whole Creation. I will take up just one of them, Paul's reflection on suffering and the promise of God in chapter 8 of Romans:

> I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is about to be revealed to us. For the Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the Creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; that the Creation itself will be set free

> from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole Creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the Creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience (*cf.* Rom 8:18-23).

In exploring this text, I will gather up insights from three specialist New Testament scholars. The Pauline authority, Joseph Fitzmyer, points out that in this text Paul is clearly thinking of redemption (*apolytrôsis*) in Christ as applying not only to human beings, but also to the whole Creation:

> It is no longer considered from an anthropological point of view; it is now recast in cosmic terms. Human bodies that are said to await such redemption (8:23) are merely part of the entire material Creation, which is itself groaning in travail until such redemption occurs. For the Christ-event is expected to affect not only human beings, but all material or physical Creation as well (Fitzmyer, 1993, 507).

Creation is held in bondage to sin, decay and death and in this it shares the lot of humanity, but it also shares with humanity the hope of redemption. The word Paul uses for decay (*phthora*), Fitzmyer tells us, "denotes not only perishability and putrefaction, but also powerlessness, lack of beauty, vitality and strength that characterizes Creation's present condition" (509). The freedom of Creation from this bondage will occur in and with the glorification of the sons and daughters of God. Fitzmyer points out that Paul is here talking about the fulfilment of the biblical promise of "new heavens and a new earth" found in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 (505).

Australian Pauline scholar, Brendan Byrne, sees this passage from Romans as one of "the most singular and evocative" texts in the whole of Paul's work (Byrne, 1996, 255). What is distinctive, he says, is the way in which it includes the whole of non-human Creation within the sweep of salvation alongside human beings. Byrne carefully analyses the meaning of the word Creation (*ktisis*) as Paul uses it here. He establishes that "it refers to the entire non-human world which the biblical Creation stories present as the essential context for human life" (255). Byrne goes on to show that Paul presupposes a Jewish tradition that sees non-human Creation as intimately bound up with the fate of human beings. This tradition goes back to the Creation story (Gn 3:17-19). Creation and humanity are understood as sharing a "common fate" in the prophetic literature of the Bible, particularly in the texts I have mentioned above (255-7). Paul builds on this "common fate" tradition, proclaiming that non-human Creation will share with human beings in the final restoration of all things in Christ, which will involve a cosmic renewal. Paul's point is that the sufferings of the present are but a small price to pay for the glory coming. As Byrne notes, Paul does not minimize the suffering of the present, but sets it in a wider framework, one that looks beyond the present to "the full realization of God's design for human beings and their world" (257).

N.T. Wright, the Bishop of Durham, says of this same text: "The greatest Pauline picture of the future world is Romans 8:19-25" (Wright, 2006, 75). He has no doubt that transformation of the whole Creation in Christ is fundamental to Paul's vision. He writes:

> Creation as we know it bears witness to God's power and glory (Rom 1:19-20), but also to the present state of futility to which it has become enslaved. But this slavery, like all slaveries in the Bible, is then given its Exodus, its moment of release, when God does for the whole cosmos what he did for Jesus at Easter. This is the vision that is so big, so dazzling, that many, even devout readers of Paul have blinked, rubbed their eyes, and ignored it, hurrying on to the more "personal" application in the following paragraph (75).

But, Wright insists, this is where Paul's whole argument of the justice of God comes to one of its great climaxes. Wright sees Romans 8 as the deepest New Testament answer to the "problem of evil," to the question of God's justice. Paul is declaring that "the renewal of Creation, the birth of the new world from the labouring womb of the old, will demonstrate that God is in the right" (75).

Paul's image of Creation groaning in giving birth to new Creation can find new meaning in a new context. It may be that the context of Paul's thought was the apocalyptic expectation of cosmic turmoil that would precede the final victory of God (Byrne, *Romans*, 256). But Paul's reflection also seems shaped by what he saw in the natural world around him. His image functions anew in the context of an understanding of the world shaped by evolutionary biology, a world of fertility, generativity and wonderful creativity, but also of struggle and suffering and death. The metaphor of birthing is at the origin of the word "nature." In the world of nature as understood in evolutionary terms, suffering and death seem to be the shadow side of prolific creativity (Rolston, 1999, 30-7).

The Earth has given birth to bacteria, trilobites, dinosaurs, mammals and human persons with their immensely complex brains. It has been a labour that has brought forth staggeringly diverse and complex forms of life, but in a process that has been very costly. In the Pauline vision, it has not yet reached its completion and fulfilment. It will not be fulfilled until it shares with human beings in God's final redemption and transformation of all things. Creation groans still as something even more radically new is being born. With the information we have today, I imagine that Paul would see God at work in this whole process of the evolution of our universe over the last 13.7 billion years and the evolution of life on Earth over the last 3.8 billion years, and that he would see God in Christ as promising a future not just for human beings but for the whole labouring Creation, when God will bring it all to redemption and fulfilment.

Hope For the Universe in Patristic Tradition: Maximus the Confessor

In patristic writers like Irenaeus, Creation and redemption are held together. They form one story of what God has done for us through the Word and in the Spirit. The whole history of history is taken up and recapitulated in Christ. For Irenaeus, the visible universe is destined to be restored and to share in glorification with the human community saved by Christ. Athanasius could speak of *Creation* being deified in the Spirit through the Word of God. He writes of the Holy Spirit: "In him, then, the Logos glorifies Creation, and deifying it and adopting it brings it to the Father" (*First Letter to Serapion*, 1.25). Athanasius sees non-human Creation participates in some way with human beings in glory, deification and adoption. This theology has been the common heritage of the Eastern Christian tradition, and much of the Western, although it has seldom received sustained theological attention.

This tradition finds influential expression in the thought of Maximus the Confessor (580-662). For Maximus, the incarnate Word of God restores the unity of the whole Creation and brings it to God. Originally, God had called humans to be the bond of union in all the divisions and the different aspects of cosmic reality. The human was meant to be a "microcosm" (a little universe), mediating and uniting the extremes of the cosmos, drawing the created order into harmony within itself and into union with God (Louth, 1996, 73). Because of the fall, human beings have failed in this function, but in the incarnation, God unites and recapitulates all things in the Word made flesh.

Maximus sees God as creating the universe of creatures with the Incarnation in mind. The Incarnation is "the end for whose sake all things exist" (*Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 60). All things are created in the eternal Word. Maximus plays on the relationship in Greek between the *Logos*, the eternal Word of God, and the *logoi*. The *logoi* are the fundamental meanings of individual creatures in their diversity. The *logoi* represent the distinct ways that different created entities participate in the *Logos* of God. All are brought into unity and right relationship in Christ, the *Logos* made flesh:

> By his own initiative, he joins together the natural ruptures in all of the natural universe, and brings to fulfilment the universal meanings (*logoi*) of individual things, by which the unification of the divided is realized. He reveals and carries out the great will of God his Father, "summing up all things in himself, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10), since all were created in him (*Quaestiones ad Thalassium* 60, trans. Daley, 2004, 171).

Jesus Christ, the *Logos* of God, unites in himself the *logoi*, the fundamental meanings of each created being, and brings all to unity and healing. In the Word made flesh all the ancient polarizations of Creation are overcome. Christ unites human beings with himself, so that we bear his image, and share his role with regard to the rest of Creation: "With us and through us he encompasses the whole Creation through its intermediaries and the extremities through their own parts" (*Ambigua* 41, trans. Louth, 1996, 160). The transfiguration of Christ is an important symbol of the transformation of Creation in Christ. Not only Jesus, but his garments, are transfigured, and these garments become a symbol of the whole Creation that shares in Christ's transfiguration. Human beings renewed in Christ, participate in his transfiguration, and participate in the transformation and healing of the whole cosmos.

These themes of the transformation and deification of Creation appear in the work of contemporary Orthodox theologians. Dumitru Staniloae, for example, says that the material universe, like humankind, "is destined for transfiguration, through the power of the risen body of Christ" (Staniloae, 1970, 211). Paul Evdokimov writes that the Second Coming of Christ, the *Parousia*, "coincides with the transformation of nature and it will be visible not within history but beyond it" (Evdokimov, 2001, 26). Vladimir Lossky says that "Divine love always pursues the same end: the deification of men, and by them, of the whole universe" (Lossky, 1978, 110). Boris Bobrinskoy speaks of the importance of "a deification that is both personal and cosmic" (Bobrinskoy, 1999, 5). Hope for the universe is not foreign to the Western tradition and is enshrined in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (pars. 1046-50). The Council affirms the final consummation and transformation of the universe, and points out how little we know of them: "We know neither the moment of the consummation of the earth and of humanity, nor the way in which the universe will be transformed." But in this new Creation, we will find again the fruits of our being, our action and our history, "cleansed this time from sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom" (Flannery, 1996, pp. 204-5).

The Deification of the Universe (Karl Rahner)

Cosmologists tell us that the observable universe is made up of something like a hundred billion galaxies. It is expanding and evolving. We can trace its history back to the first second of its existence, about 13.7 billion years ago, when it was extremely small, dense and hot. As the galaxies move away from one another, the rate of expansion seems to be increasing. There are two scientific scenarios for the future of the universe. Either it will stop expanding at some point in the future, then begin to collapse back into an extremely small, dense and hot state, or it will continue to expand and cool forever. The present view of many cosmologists is that the universe is destined to expand forever, becoming less energetic and incapable of supporting life. Clearly, all carbon-based life is destined for extinction. In about five billion years our Sun will become a red giant, engulfing the orbit of Earth and Mars, and eventually become a white dwarf star. In 40-50 billion years star formation will have ended in our galaxy and in others (Russell, 2008, 300-1).

This is a bleak scenario of the future. What does it leave Christian hope? How can the predictions that science makes about the future be reconciled with the promise of a new Creation? Karl Rahner sees the resurrection of the crucified as not only the promise but also the beginning of the deification of the world itself. He insists that what has occurred in Jesus, as part of the physical, biological and human world, is *ontologically* "the embryonically final beginning of the glorification and divinization of the *whole* reality"

(Rahner, 1966, 128). In this section, I will explore further this idea of the deification of the material universe against the background of the scientific picture of endless dissipation. This will involve a consideration of the mysterious nature of matter itself, its radical transformation in new Creation and the real continuity between the universe that we are part of today and God's new Creation.

What Does it Mean to Speak of the Deification of Matter?

In the biblical and patristic traditions, the material universe was seen as God's good Creation and destined to share with human beings in God's final fulfilment when Christ comes again. Often the focus was on the human. But the human being was seen as necessarily bodily and as interconnected with a non-human world. The final fulfilment of human beings was understood as involving a new relationship with the Triune God, with the human community and with the wider Creation. In my view this tradition is a precious resource for contemporary theology. In the light of a more recent understanding of the history of the universe and of life on our planet, and confronted by twenty-first century ecological issues, the theological meaning of non-human Creation and its future in God needs to be raised today in a less anthropocentric way.

In exploring this issue, it is worth noting that we do not know much about matter. William Stoeger has pointed out that while we think of the spiritual as being mysterious, we tend to think we understand matter. Common sense suggests that the world of matter is more or less straight forward. But in this case common sense misleads us. Matter itself is mysterious. The more we know about general relativity, particle physics, quantum mechanics, the origins of matter in the early universe and the nucleosynthesis of elements in stars, the more counter-intuitive and mysterious matter becomes. And we are far from understanding the relationship between the ever-changing matter that makes up our bodies and our personal and interpersonal "I". The mysterious nature of matter, as well as all that we mean by spirit, suggests that we might well be open to a future for matter and spirit that exceeds anything we can imagine at present.

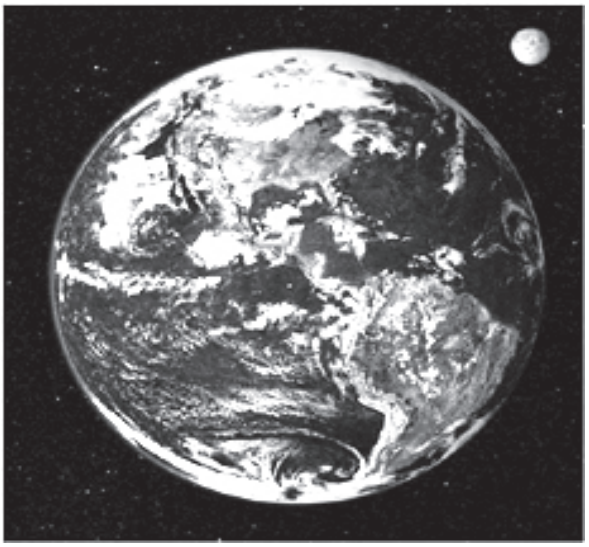
Karl Rahner insists that matter really does matter to God. God created a universe of creatures as an act of self-bestowing love, always intending to embrace the material world in the incarnation and to bring it to its fulfilment in Christ. Some Christians have seen the material world as a kind of stage for the drama of salvation, a stage that will have no further use in eternal life. Rahner insists, by contrast, that matter is not something to be cast aside as a transitory part of the journey of the spirit. It has been carried from the beginning by God's self-bestowing love. We know that our universe began from a tiny, dense, and extremely hot state and has been expanding every since, allowing galaxies to form, stars to ignite, and planets like Earth to form. This whole process, and every aspect of it, has been carried by the triune God, present, in love, to ever part of it. Every emergent aspect of the universe is sustained by the Source of All, created in the Word and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Rahner speaks of this self-bestowal in love as "the most immanent element in every creature." Therefore he can say: "It is not mere pious lyricism when Dante regards even the sun and the other planets as being moved by that love which is God himself as he who bestows himself" (Rahner, 1973, 289). In terms of contemporary cosmology, we would say that the innermost principle of the movement of the galaxies and their stars, the innermost principle of the expanding and evolving universe, is God present in self-bestowing love.

Because of God's Creation of a material universe in self-giving love, because of the incarnation, and because of the resurrection, God and matter go together. As Creator, God has been intimately engaged with the material universe at every point. God has become flesh, and become matter in the incarnation. In the Risen Christ, part of the material universe is already taken into God as pledge and beginning of the fulfilment of material Creation in God. By speaking of the deification of the material universe, what is being claimed is that the universe will reach its own proper fulfilment in being taken up in God's self-giving love. This is to be distinguished from the interpersonal fulfilment offered to human beings. It is the

fulfilment of matter precisely as matter. While it is distinguished from the deifying interpersonal fulfilment of human beings, it is profoundly interconnected with it.

All of this means that Christians are, or perhaps ought to be, "the most sublime of materialists." We cannot think of our fulfillment without thinking of the fulfilment of the material universe and we cannot conceive of the Risen Christ except as existing forever in the state of incarnation. This means that "as materialists we are more crassly materialist than those who call themselves so" (Rahner, 1971, 183). We recognize that matter will last forever, and be glorified forever.



Radical Transformation

Rahner couples his claim that matter has an eternal destiny with the insistence that matter will undergo a radical transformation, "the depths of which we can only sense with fear and trembling in that process which we experience as our death"(Rahner, 1971, 183). If, as Rahner claims, the only way we can get a sense of the radical nature of the final transformation is by analogy with our own death, clearly this new Creation is not simply an outcome of the ongoing evolution of the universe or of human progress. I find this an important insight. It can be taken further in relationship to the death of Christ. The real basis for understanding the radical nature of the transformation of the universe is the transformation that occurs in the crucified Jesus, just as the reality of the continuity between Jesus who was crucified and the Risen Christ indicates the continuity between this universe and new Creation.

New Creation transcends and transfigures the old. As Paul Evdokimov points out, that the day of the coming of Christ cannot be numbered with other days; "The hand of God seizes the closed circle of empirical time and lifts it to a higher horizon, a different dimension. This 'day' closes historical time but does not itself belong to time. It cannot be found on our calendars and for this reason we cannot predict it" (Evdokimov, 2001, 25). Time, space and matter will reach their fulfilment and find their future in the boundless life of God. We have no information from the Scriptures or any other source about the nature of this deification of our universe — only the promise given in Christ and his Resurrection of a future in God.

Jürgen Moltmann has been strong in his insistence that only a radical act of God can bring healing and redemption to the whole Creation. We will not be redeemed by evolutionary processes. Salvation can come only from a universal transformation of this present world, of the kind described in Revelation, where God says: "See, I am making all things new" (21:5). This means, according to Moltmann, that "everything created, everything that was here, is here, and will be here" is to be made new. The new, eternal Creation is to be the new Creation of this world that we know (Moltmann in Ellis, 2002, 261). Richard Bauckham has also vigorously criticized the importing of Enlightenment optimism and views of historical and evolutionary progress into eschatology (Bauckham, in Bockmuehl, 2001, 271-3). I think that Moltmann and Bauckham are right when they claim that final salvation cannot come from more of the same, but only from a radical act of God that transforms the whole Creation from beginning to end by taking it eternally into the divine life of the Trinity.

New Creation depends upon a transforming act of God, as radical as the act by which God raised Jesus from the dead. I think that this theological insight can shed some light on the problem I have described concerning the difference between biblical hope and the current scientific picture of the future of the universe as expanding endlessly, becoming cold and lifeless. The problem is based in part on an assumption that the universe can be thought of evolving seamlessly towards new Creation. If the theological idea of God's final transformation of Creation is presumed to *coincide* with the far distant future of the universe, there is obviously a problem of reconciling theological eschatology and scientific predictions. But there is no need to make this assumption. Theologically, we have a promise that the universe will be transformed and find its culmination in God. Theology has no information about when or how this will be. The theological claim is not that the universe will evolve into a perfect state at the end and that this will then coincide with the divine act that makes all thinks new. If God's act is a radical one, if the best analogy for this kind of transformation is what happens in death, above all the death of Christ, then the divine act of making the whole universe new does not depend on the universe gradually evolving towards perfection.

It is fundamental to remember that the Resurrection of the Crucified was not dependant on any obvious movement towards completion or perfection in the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus' mission was interrupted by what seemed totally catastrophic. The Resurrection was the transformation of a brutal execution and a disastrous end to Jesus' ministry into unpredictable new life. The Resurrection was a radical overturning of the rejection and savage violence and apparent failure of Jesus' mission. Yet, at a deeper level, Christians have come to see that God's act of raising Jesus up was also in fact in profound *continuity* with Jesus' life lived in love and with his death as the most radical expression of this love.

Real Continuity

While I agreed above with Moltmann and Bauckham about the radical transformation involved in new Creation, I want to affirm more strongly than they do the *continuity* between this Creation we experience and God's new act. I find this continuity expressed in Rahner's notion of self-transcendence. He holds that God gives to creatures themselves the capacity for the new. Because of God's creative and redeeming presence *to creatures they can become something they were not.* When matter comes to life on Earth, when life becomes self-conscious and personal, this occurs through God enabling Creation to transcend itself and become something new. Above all when one of us in the human and creaturely community, Jesus of Nazareth, is so radically open to God, so one with God, that we rightly see him as God-with-us, then we can say that in this person Creation transcends itself into God. Jesus then is both God's self-communication to Creation and Creation's self-transcendence into God.

Rahner argues that something similar happens when the whole Creation is finally taken up into God. All that constitutes our cosmic, social and personal history, the emergence of the universe, the evolution of life on Earth and our human history, will be taken up and find fulfilment in the life of God. On the one hand, the coming Reign of God will not simply be the outcome of the evolution of cosmic history and it will not be

simply the result of the history that is planned and accomplished by humans. On the other hand, it will not simply come upon Creation as an act of God from outside. It will be the deed of God, but this deed of God is to be understood as the *self*-transcendence of history, both cosmic and personal.

In cosmic terms this suggests that the coming of God will fulfil rather than overturn the laws and processes at work in the history of our universe and the evolution of life on Earth. In the last chapter I referred to an important insight from Robert John Russell: He argues that the new Creation is not to be seen as replacement of the old, or as a new Creation *ex nihilo*. Rather, God must have created the universe "such that is it transformable" (Russell, 2008, 308). God created a universe with precisely those characteristics that are needed as preconditions for God's act of new Creation. These conditions and characteristics of the present Creation are created in such a way that they can be transformed in new Creation. It seems to me that what Russell is describing here is an important part of what Rahner means when he speaks of God's action occurring in and through the self-transcendence of our cosmic and evolutionary history.

This self-transcendence in new Creation is also a matter of great importance for our human actions. This theology gives ultimate importance to our actions and acts of love. They will have a place in God's future. Rahner points out that there is a dialectical tension between two statements, both of which are true: on the one hand, human history will endure and, on the other hand, it will be radically transformed. The tension between them is fundamental, because it "maintains in us an openness to the future while still according a radical importance to the present." Our own history and our own acts contribute to God's future. History is not left behind but "passes into the definitive consummation of God" (Rahner, 1973, 270). Our own efforts, our ecological commitments, our struggle for justice, our work for peace, our acts of love, our failures, our own moments of quiet prayer, our suffering, all have final meaning.

Our history, and our own personal story, matter to God. The Word of God has entered into history for our salvation. History is embraced by God in the Christ-event and human history is taken into God in the resurrection. It has eternal meaning to God. Our stories have final significance, as taken up into God and transformed in Christ. This is what it means for God to transform the world in redeeming, deifying love. This is the ultimate meaning of the divine self-bestowal that finds expression in Creation, redemption and final fulfilment.

Hope for the Animals

In chapter 5 of the Book of Revelation, the angels, with the four living creatures who represent Creation and with the elders, all sing a hymn of praise to the Lamb who has been slain. Then every creature, without exception joins in:

> Then I heard every creature in heaven
> and on earth
> and under the earth
> and in the sea,
> and all that is in them, singing,
> "To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb
> Be blessing and honour and glory and might
> for ever and ever!" (Rv 5:13).

In this vision, every creature in all four realms of sky, ground, underground and sea, unite in a song of praise, celebrating redemption in the Lamb who was slaughtered. The animals, the birds, the insects and the worms and all the other underground creatures are participants in the joy of the new Creation.

How are we to understand this text? While the post-biblical tradition has found ways to affirm that new Creation in Christ involves hope not only for human beings but for

the universe itself, it has not often dealt in an explicit way with hope for other animals. Implicitly, of course, Paul's words about suffering Creation can be taken as involving the living, biological world. Can we make a more explicit claim? I propose that we can. As always, such a claim needs to be prefaced by acknowledging how little information we have about the nature of the life of the new Creation. We know very little. What we can know is the God revealed to us in Jesus and the promise given to our world in his Resurrection. This, I will propose, allows us to say some important things about hope for the other animals: that each is known and loved by God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, redeemed by Christ, abides forever in the living memory of God, and participates in resurrection life in a way beyond imagining.

1. Individual animals are known and loved by God. In the Gospel of Matthew, we find Jesus calling his Disciples to radical trust in God's providence, and pointing to God's care for each single sparrow: "Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's consent" (Mt 10:29). The Wisdom of Solomon tells us that God creates each creature out of love. Animals, birds and insects exist because God loves them. They are called forth and held in existence only out of love (Wis 11:24-26). The biblical God is a God of tenderness and compassion for all creatures. I think it is helpful to reflect on our own capacity as human beings to relate to other animals. We have the capacity for feeling with them, of feeling empathy with their pain, and joy in their well-being and vitality. This, surely, can give us a glimpse into the Creator's feeling for living things. We are right to think that our human experience of compassion for other creatures is but the palest reflection of the divine compassion for animals. The God of Jesus is a God of radical compassion, a compassion that has no boundaries. Such a God can be thought of as knowing each creature's experience, delighting in each, suffering with each and embracing each in love.

2. The Creator Spirit is interiorly present to each creature enabling it to exist and to act

It is the presence of God in the Spirit that confers existence on each animal. As Thomas Aquinas says, nothing is more interior to an entity than its existence and this means that God's presence and creative action is what is most interior to all things. In the language of the Bible, the Spirit breathes life into all things of flesh. They have life only because of the Breath of God: "If he should take back his spirit to himself, and gather to himself his breath, all flesh would perish together, and all mortals return to dust" (Jb 34:14-15). Psalm 105 [104], the great celebration of God's Creation, sings of the heavens, the earth, the living creatures of the land and sky, and the sea with all its life forms small and great and sees them all as held in being by God's Spirit: "When you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground" (Ps 104:27-30). The Spirit is creatively present to every creature, dwelling in each, surrounding it with love, holding it in a community of Creation and accompanying it in its life and in its death.

3. Animals participate in some way in redemption in Christ

When Revelation envisions all living creatures, "in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea," singing praise to the One sitting on the throne and the Lamb who had been slain, it is clear that all these creatures are thought of as sharing in some way in the redemption brought about by the crucified and Risen Christ. When Paul speaks of the groaning of Creation, and sees it as awaiting its participation in redemption, it seems that the suffering Creation he has in mind includes non-human biological life. When Colossians and Ephesians insist that "all things" in the cosmos are recapitulated (Eph 1:10) and reconciled (Col 1:20) in Christ, it would seem that "all things" would include not only the material Creation, the cosmic powers and human beings, but also other animals.

While the Christian tradition has not often reflected carefully on the redemption of animals, the Eastern theology of redemption and deification through incarnation is a theology cast in the widest possible terms, those of God and the whole Creation. God embraces and takes to God's self the whole Creation in the incarnation. In a particular way God embraces flesh, not just human flesh, but all the flesh that is so intimately connected with it. In taking flesh in Jesus of Nazareth, God becomes part of the history of biological evolution of life on Earth, with the whole web of life and all that supports it. This suggests that God's redemptive act in the incarnation may be seen as taking the whole world of flesh into the divine life, in the new Creation and the deification of all things in Christ. But the question remains: What does it mean to speak of other animals participating with us in the new Creation?

4. Each animal abides forever in the living memory of God

In Luke's version of the saying about the sparrow, Jesus states that not one sparrow is "forgotten before God" (Lk 12:6). It is held eternally in the divine memory. This concept of the divine memory provides the basis for an approach to the final redemption of other living creatures. The biblical and liturgical concept of memory offers an important resource. In the liturgy of the Church, we remember the wonderful things God has done in Creation and redemption. When we celebrate the Eucharist in memory (*anamnçsis*) of Jesus, we are dealing with a remembrance that not only brings to mind the past, but acts powerfully in the present and anticipates an eschatological future. This experience of living memory may provide a pale analogy for God's redemptive memory. What is being suggested here is that God can be thought of not only as present with each creature in the Spirit, loving it and conferring on it existence and the capacity to act, but also as inscribing it eternally in the living memory and experience of divine trinitarian life.

For the Bible, while our memory of God is a fundamental requirement, it is God's remembrance that is primary. God remembers God's Covenant with us forever (Ps 105 [104]:8). Human beings pray that God will hold them in the divine memory (Jb 7:7; 10:9; 14:13; Ps 78 [77]:39). Humans exist because God remembers them and holds them in provident care (Ps 8:4). Alexander Schmemann writes of this biblical concept:

> Memory refers to the attentiveness of God to his Creation, the power of divine providential love through which God "holds" the world and *gives it life*, so that life itself can be termed abiding in the memory of God, and death the falling out of this memory. In other words, memory, like everything else in God, is *real*, it is that life that he grants, that God "*remembers*"; it *is* the eternal overcoming of the "nothing" out of which God called us into "his wonderful light" (Schmemann, 1988, 125).

In this view, it is the divine memory that enables creatures to be and to interact. It is powerfully and wonderfully creative. To be held in the divine memory is to be continually created "*ex nihilo*," to be enabled to exist, to find food and water and to reproduce. The divine memory creates, making things live. It enables a diverse world of creatures to evolve on our planet. In response to God's creative remembrance, humans are the creatures who are particularly called to remember God. This is the human gift and responsibility: the human person is one who "comprehends the world as God's world, receives it from God and raises it up to God" (Schmemann, 1988, 125). In response to God who keeps the whole of Creation in mind, and brings it to life, the human being is called to remember the Creator and thus enter more fully into the life bestowed on them. The human remembrance of God is "the reception of this life-creating gift, the constant *acquisition* of and increase in life" (126).

Based on the faithful love of God revealed in Christ, it can be said that God will not forget any creature that God loves and creates. Each is inscribed eternally in the divine life. The sparrow that falls to the ground is not abandoned, but is gathered up and brought to redemptive new life in Christ, in whom "Creation itself will be set free from

its bondage to decay" (Rom 8:21). The sparrow that falls to the ground is among the "all things" that are reconciled (Col 1:20), recapitulated (Eph 1:10) and made new (Rv 21:5) in the Risen Christ. The shared life of God can be thought of as involving the holding and treasuring of every creature of every time in the living present of the Trinity. In the Communion of Saints, we can be thought of as coming to share the divine delight in each creature. The Communion of Saints would, then, open up as the communion of all Creation. The capacity we already have to treasure all that makes up the history of life offers a hint of what might be possible to God. Again, our memory, even our liturgical remembering, can only be a poor analogy for the divine capacity to hold all things and make them live in the eternal memory of the Triune God.

In the incarnational theology being suggested here, each sparrow, known and loved by God, participates in redemption in Christ, and is eternally held and treasured in the life of the Trinity. The creatures that spring from the abundance of divine Communion find redemption in being taken up eternally into this Communion in a way that we cannot fully articulate. John Haught speaks of the whole of Creation as being redeemed by being taken up into the enduring divine experience of the world. He says that everything in Creation, "all the suffering and tragedy as well as the emergence of new life and intense beauty" is being *saved* by "being taken eternally into God's feeling for the world" (Haught, 2000, 43). Individual creatures abide permanently within the everlasting compassion of God.

In this proposal, individual creatures are taken up into the living experience of the Trinity, and are celebrated, respected and honoured in the divine Communion and in the Communion of Saints. I have already pointed out that we know very little about the *how* of our risen life in Christ, and we know less about that of other creatures. We hope for what is beyond our capacity to imagine because our hope is in the God who remains always incomprehensible mystery. We hope for what we do not see (Rom 8:24) and cannot imagine, the transformation of the whole Creation in Christ. What we know is the promise of God given in the Resurrection of the Word made flesh. We can hope that, in our participation in the Communion of Saints, we will also participate in God's delight in other animals within the abundance of Creation that reaches it fulfilment in God. In particular we may hope that the relationship we have with particular creatures, such as a beloved dog, does not end with death, but it taken into eternal life.

5. There is reason to hope that animals participate in resurrection life in Christ

I have been proposing that each animal, known and loved by God, is the dwelling place of the Creator Spirit and participates in redemption in Christ, abiding forever in the living memory of God. Can more be said? I think it can. I think it can be said that animals will reach their redemptive fulfilment in Christ. They will not only be remembered and treasured, but remembered in such a way as to be called into new life. We do not

have an imaginative picture of the new Creation. Any imaginative picture we can form that is based on our present experience will quickly prove inadequate. But this is true, as well, for the resurrection of human beings. We can imagine the resuscitation of a corpse, but we cannot imagine the radical transformation of resurrection. The fact that resurrection life is beyond imagination does not mean that it is not real. Our imaginations are of limited use, and do not function well in dealing with God, who is the absolute future and the power of new life. Of course, they are also inadequate for dealing with quantum physics and with cosmology. What is real can be beyond our imaginations and our concepts.

The basis for hope is not our imagination but the God revealed in Jesus. As I pointed out earlier, we need a negative theology of the future. We need to know what we do not know. What we have is hope based on our experience of God with us in Jesus and in the Spirit. As Elizabeth Johnson has said, our hope is not based upon information about the future but on "the character of God" revealed in the Christ-event (Johnson, 1998, 201). What I am proposing is that we can think that, based on the character of God revealed in the Christ-event, individual animals and birds will participate in some way in risen life. They will find their fulfilment in God. The God of resurrection life is a God who brings individual creatures in their own distinctiveness *in some way* into the eternal dynamic life of the divine Communion.

In Revelation the One sitting on the throne says: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rv 21:5). I am proposing that this "all things" includes other animals. It is clear that God will respect the particular nature that is specific to each creature. What is appropriate fulfillment for a human being may not be appropriate to a crab, a mosquito or a bacterium. It is important to remember that great theologians like Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure saw the diversity of creatures as expressing the boundless abundance of the divine goodness. There is every reason to hope that the diverse range of creatures that spring from the abundance of this divine Communion will find redemption in being taken up eternally into this divine Communion in ways that are appropriate to each. Because God relates to each creature on its own terms, final fulfillment will fit the nature of each creature. With this in mind, I think it can be said that individual creatures will find their proper redemption in the divine Communion in a way that we cannot fully imagine or articulate.

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Seminar's Working Groups

English Working Groups ....

Report n. 1

Wednesday, 13 May

Where am I personally, on this long journey of ecological transformation, ecological conversion?

Personal level: As individual members we are conscious and aware of our responsibility towards ecology and its preservation, but we are not convinced enough to move into radical action or to motivate others to do the same.

Level of Congregations: some pockets of some Congregations respond to this issue differently, to a more or less active degree. Some Congregations are indifferent or have a totally different focus. However, as a group, we firmly believe that religious Congregations need to move towards a deep, prophetic commitment on a personal and congregational level with the conviction that every minute destruction of the planet, in any form, is a destruction of the Face of Our Creator God. We believe we need to make a difference.

How can we bring out better the ecological consequences of our Eucharistic celebrations?

When I celebrate Eucharist, I bring all Creation to the table. Do we realize, truly realize, what we are celebrating and remembering? It is a huge call to personal mindfulness that when we come to the table, we bring the world with us.

Remember all who have laboured and suffered to prepare the bread and wine, and to live that moment, embracing the universe.

The Eucharist embraces all of Creation; as we encounter God in nature, we need to re-look at our own spirituality.

The Church may speak eloquently of ecological issues but make regulations that are contrary to establishing and promoting communion. We need to remind ourselves and others that humans are equal in God's eyes.

How can we look for ways and means to make our Eucharisitc celebrations more life-giving and personally transforming!

We need to preserve the sense of the "sacred" in religious life.

Friday, 15 May

1. Where do we go from here?

Concrete suggestions:

- Educate ourselves further and educate our membership;
- We certainly need to have our JPIC representative in place to stimulate, motivate and encourage members;
- Focus on one aspect e.g. of 'Climate change' since we still have a small window of opportunity left;
- Develop an eco-spirituality and include this in formation programmes;
- We must net-work with existing groups on 'climate change';
- Look at and deal with unjust structures within our own congregational bodies;
- Put things out on the web-site;
- Put out posters and flyers by way of education and 'conscientizing' people towards 'climate change';
- Spirituality is the only way that changes people. Hence as religious we need to strengthen our own theology and spirituality and consider this our responsibility.

Report n. 2

Wednesday, 13 May

1. Where am I in the journey of ecological conversion?

· Wasting water has been a lifelong concern for me. I pressed for a major renovation of our conference centre to incorporate a grey-water system, but expense and time prevailed. I collect rain-water for plants. I periodically used well water, but when I realized it takes 100 years to be available, I changed to using soap and rain-water to clean the rain-water buckets.

· On visiting relatives I observed that discarded plastic wrappers were littering public areas. I picked up a wrapper thrown down this way and carried it all day. There were no waste-bins in public areas for collecting rubbish. I carry my own re-usable cup or can.

· The Government needs to pass laws encouraging the use of re-usable bags and fine those for the offense of littering public places. It should provide the example, the opportunity and the fine.

· Religious groups are in a good position to work with government to change policies regarding the protection of the environment.

· The session today is an inspiration and a strong call to conversion. I feel I have lived my whole life regardless of the ecological impact of my actions.

· I was disappointed that at this conference SEDOS had not worked with the host

facility not to provide fresh towels and linen daily. We are using many disposable plastic cups. In hotels where we hold large group events we may have "upset the house", but we have recycled and lessened our impact on the landfill. You have to act.

· To live this ecological journey in our own house, has to be a co-operative effort, otherwise you may have people turning lights on again in spaces no one is using. This leads to living in conflict.

· Resources which can feed people today, necessarily diminish they if are not developed to last for the next several generations.

· I am learning new ways and teaching new ways, so that our waste does not compromise our neighbour's access to natural resources.

· From reading Brian Swimme's concepts I have moved from attending conferences to working on committees to promote awareness of the ecological crisis.

· Living on an organic farm I have the practise, but now I am moving on to facilitate with the language of the new cosmology of my further conversion.

· I am challenged by the realization that my present awareness of the ecological crisis is rather low, I need to change and move from being the "centre" to "being within".

· I live a simple life, without some modern machines, e.g. an electric dish-washer, as a symbol and action relating to my awareness of my ecological footprint.

2. Where is my Congregation in its realization of ecological conversion?

· Our Chapters repeatedly contain enactments developed by grass-roots' energy and passion on matters of ecology.
· We have justice and peace persons named in each Province, but it is not visible, urgent or making a difference.
· After awareness we need to learn the theology. Then the language will empower us to speak or act with conviction.

3. How do we help society and Government provide support for ecological practices to effect systemic change?

· Children learn quickly, but adults are often stuck in "the way we have always done it". So someone needs to create a seamless path from the peeling of an apple to the proper bin, to the compost pile, to produce compost.
· We are signing petitions to promote the protection of endangered species and other ecological issues.
· We engage in political action with specific proposals in our neighborhood: against coal-powered electrical plants seeking a license to be built (won it), water purification, waste management, recycling services made easy and available.
· We have done land assessments of our property, that is, we embrace the challenge to place all our efforts within the concept of the new cosmology.
· It is a challenge *not* to let this ecology promotion become a divisive issue. There is a place for all of us as we embrace awareness moving from the "arrogant eye" to the "eye of love".
· We have made changes and need to make more.

· Speaking at meetings does not always have the appropriate follow-up when we go home.
· What would happen if our fears (of the new, the different, any fear) were looked at as so many opportunities for a relationship of love? If we are enemies of each other how can we befriend Creation?
· Our whole Council is here at SEDOS, we are part of a *chain* of *choices* made before us.

Thursday, 14 May 2009

1. How can we bring out better the ecological consequences of our Eucharistic celebrations?

· We hold seriously different theological positions from what was presented this morning — so we cannot answer the question.

2. <u>What are</u> the ecological consequences?

· If a <u>woman</u> had given the presentation it would have been a challenge, not the "Church line".
· My experience of Eucharist on retreat was that the penitential rite of grieving for extinct species listed them. The Eucharistic prayer was written in terms of the universal story.
· If we want to address ecological issues with Eucharist something will have to change.
· In Eucharist we recite the words as routine. The penitential rite could incorporate and address the "wasting" of our natural resources.
· In India we bring all the Indian culture into the Eucharistic Prayer.

3. How do we make the liturgy <u>communal?</u>

· In Africa Easter was celebrated with vibrant native song and dance. When I came to Rome and was at liturgy with my friends I found myself asking, "Why am I here? And what am I doing?
· I believe the Eucharist is a "community" in the cosmic of Christ. The whole assembly exploded with applause at the consecration.

4. How often do I consciously bring the rest of the world to Eucharist with me?

· In Africa, at the Offertory we bring <u>what we have</u>: a chicken, some sugar-cane, not coins, and there is a great exchange so that no one is left out.
· When the Eucharist is celebrated in a small group the "sign of peace" may be more than a gesture.
· I have been in a situation where the priest went out of the community to celebrate Mass for <u>others.</u> There is a great injustice for the people who are not being served. Tremendous injustice.
· Often we fail to address the needs of the local community within and after the Eucharist. It takes thoughtful preparation and follow up.
· As religious Congregations we have a lot of un-learning (un-loading) around the daily Eucharist.

· International Congregations have started a campaign for the relief of those in need.
· We catechise one another, even the *Magisterium* through conferences like this. They don't just happen.
· The laity wants to serve *others*, if given an opportunity to be catechized.
· I wish to deepen my awareness of how I can bring the rest of the global community to the celebration of the Eucharist.
· "Out of the Tabernacle" if the Holy Communion is not brought regularly, then the people pray without the Eucharist.
· Ritual has to be *rich* and that takes time to prepare, so it is probably not daily.
· I was with a Sister and a few Muslim men. We were exhausted from a journey and had not eaten anything all that day. We came to the tent of a Berber woman and we were invited to sit in a circle. She brought a large freshly baked loaf of bread, held it up and broke off pieces, and passed them to us with the words: "in the name of God". And we experienced the Eucharist-in-practice.

Friday, 15 May 2009

1. What do I need to do now to take this concept of ecological conversion more seriously?

2. What suggestions am I willing to take to my Congregation to facilitate the issue of ecological conversion?

· Take more time, even if only 5-10 minutes, to reflect personally on the liturgical texts for Eucharistic celebrations.
· Allow oneself to be challenged by the call to ecological conversion.
· Offer to help other religious Congregations and invite them to share in specific ecological issues.
· Integrate this SEDOS Seminar and its fruit into my local contacts.
· This is a significant challenge for those from the third world countries, where resources of fuel or water are limited and the forest is nearly or already depleted.
· Guatemalan women started a nursery for trees, and took the seedlings to a farmers' market. They collected rain-water and promoted the growing of vegetables that could be used or sold to bring more resources into the local community.
· Power point attracts attention, is flexible and portable.
· Will encourage a member of the Congregation to attend the Copenhagen Meeting.
· My challenge is to be more convinced of the efficacy of what we have already started.
· Encourage our members to engage in re-cycling projects and to re-cycle and propose green issues at gatherings.
· As a teacher I will suggest to my students to walk once a week to decrease the use of fuel and to increase exercise.
· Live a simple life and help to interconnect with justice and peace committees.
· Organize my time to allow for a more reflective focus for action.
· Share with others the fruit of this workshop, to promote concrete sharing.
· To share spirituality in action — the use of clay pots that reduce fuel consumption.
· Foster an awareness of the sacredness of everything. Act with non-violence, speak with non-violence.
· Ask our Congregation to get rid of plastic bottles. Plant zero scape.
· Lobby Congregation's decision-makers for greener construction and deconstruction.

Report n. 3

Ecological conversion is the major insight and personal challenge that convinced us that we must act for the sake of the planet. We heard the urgency of taking up this challenge for the future of our planet and all of Creation. This is important for our Congregations and in all areas of life.

The speakers Sean McDonagh, SSC, and Denis Edwards took us through an awakening, an awareness of the interconnectedness of all Creation. We shared experiences of our personal and congregational journeys. We are at different stages yet we know this is a challenge we cannot walk away from. Some shared their experiences of how they were awakened to a greater awareness of the interconnectedness of the whole universe.

We stand in wonder and amazement as we remember Creation has been evolving over 13.7 billion years.

We appreciated the way Creation is included in the Eucharistic prayers as the gifts are "lifted up" to God in offering and thanksgiving. The awareness of Creation mentioned in the Eucharistic prayers and in Scripture is an insight we want to deepen.

The experience was rich as participants shared special moments of being with indigenous people and people from various cultures whose celebrations bring alive the mystery and wonder of Creation, especially at significant moments. We asked how we could include these insights in our Eucharistic liturgy.

To continue our personal and congregational journeys we all want to become better informed, to be committed to personal and congregation ecological conversion.

Each Congregation has members who are passionate and committed to the integrity of Creation. With the support of like-minded members, and in dialogue they will be catalysts in raising awareness.

In our formation programmes we need to provide information, however it's vital the programmes are also experiential and ongoing. Some may find integrity of Creation a gentler way of being involved than focusing on justice and peace.

Ecological concerns are being raised at Congregational General Chapters calling all members to engage in care for the Earth and the integrity of Creation.

The cry of the poor and the cry of the earth cannot be ignored.

Report n. 4

13 May 2009

Where am I personally on this ecological journey?

Participation in the conference: some individuals are reflecting on this issue for the first time, since they are aware that ecological issues and the new science are contemporary areas of importance;
Some have experienced a connection to the land from their childhood, so this is not a new intuition or sensitivity;
Acute awareness of the need for conversion/transformation and the urgency to act, to "walk our talk";
A desire to deepen one's sense of being a member of a global community;
Concern about our "carbon footprint" – as congregational leaders our ministry requires extensive air travel. What can we do to compensate for this?
Committed to concrete action in sustainable living in an urban environment: urban bee-keeping; worm farming for compost;
Personal faith strengthened by the "praxis" of living out an ecological sensitivity;
Personal ecological journey involves collaboration;
Ecological conversion calls individuals to look at the use of time, to reclaim the "Sabbath";
Personal love of nature, which opens the individual to the universe and its beauty and mystery;
Personal interest in the vision of the Cosmic Christ as reflected in the writings of Teilhard de Chardin;
The charism of the Congregation is healing – there is an urgent need for healing in the area of ecology;
Particular cultures, such as that of Japan, have a strong cosmological dimension;
Personal sense of interconnectedness with Creation is affirmed by reflection on cosmology and ecological transformation.

Where is my Congregation on this ecological journey?

Most Congregations have strong commitments in the area of justice, peace and integrity of Creation, which are addressed in diverse ways: work for implementation of the MDGs; study of the Earth Charter; development of projects involving agriculture, reforestation, water, recycling, herbal medicines, solar energy;
Congregational documents direct members to deepen their understanding, commitment and action as part of the Earth community;
Leadership has been called to look at cosmology and reflect on its insights in relation to contemporary religious life — programmes for life-long formation are being developed according to these learnings;
Networking with other groups (CAFOD, U.N., Canadian Organization for Development and Peace) who share this ecological vision of sustainable development;
Congregations have different levels of awareness and action in their ecological journey; within a Congregation members also have different modes of awareness and action;
Responsible ecological stewardship should be a role of leadership. Leaders are called to unify, to make links, to connect members with God, one another and all Creation;
Intrinsic to Franciscan Congregations is the call to deepen their living of the vision of Francis, who saw all Creation as sister and brother;

There is a challenge to live our vows from this ecological perspective. How can we do this in a concrete way?

We are called as Congregations to a sacred journey, to live in solidarity with the community of life;

We are faced as ministers with the challenge of accompanying our people when they are faced with ecological distress: flooding, desertification, water scarcity.

14 May 2009

<u>How can we bring out better the ecological consequences of our Eucharistic celebrations?</u>

We believe that the Eucharist is rich in symbols, rich in "matter", the material which moves our imagination and our senses. We have water, oil, bread and wine, fire, incense – these symbols could all be utilized in a heightened way to elicit ecological conversion. Water can be used as a focal point during the penitential rite/asperges. The offering of fruits of the earth in procession or in dance might serve to connect the Eucharist more visually with ecology. In rural communities, we could celebrate with greater intentionality the seasons of planting and harvesting. (A concrete example given by one sister: In Africa, the offertory of the Sunday Eucharist becomes a moment of thanksgiving where families present gifts symbolizing their lived experience during the previous week).

In our ecological reflection, we have emphasized the interconnectedness and interdependence of all Creation. How do our worship spaces reflect this vision? Do we consider using the outdoors as a setting for Eucharist?

However, our discussion mainly focused on this question: "Why hadn't we thought of the Eucharistic/ecological insights of Denis Edwards?". Denis spoke so eloquently about Eucharist as eating, sharing and communion around a table of inclusion for all Creation. For many of us this is not our experience. We find our Eucharistic imagination constrained by law, rubrics and liturgical directives. We are further constrained by time, personal devotion and nostalgia for past liturgical constructs. We believe that both presiders and the worshiping community need liturgical formation in order to make the connection between Eucharist and ecology.

Several cultures in our group — Brazilian, Asian, Indian and African — are cultures of the Earth. How can these cultural expressions be respected in our Eucharist? Are we catholic enough to integrate new meaningful symbols (foodstuffs) into Eucharist which truly represent the work and giftedness of human hands? Sadly, we recognize that the introduction of new symbols may become a source of division and even alienation rather than communion.

The challenge we see is continuity with a Eucharistic tradition which can create spaces for the lived, aesthetic experience of a people who desire a celebration which is an authentic, lived Eucharist of communion with all things.

15 May 2009

<u>What do I need to do in a concrete way as an individual to take this ecological journey more seriously?</u>

Deepen conceptual/spiritual level: reread notes from this conference; search out articles/books to continue learning and awareness;

Work in our school by raising the consciousness of students about their need for ecological conversion/action;
Chart carbon footprint as a general team – find ways to compensate; i.e., planting of a tree;
Choose daily to live a simple life in Rome;
Continue to participate in a Philippine watershed project, which is intercongregational, inter-diocesan and interfaith;
Create compost; continue worm farming; practice water conservation;
Network, collaborate with other Congregations/organizations in this area;
Spend more time in nature; with animals;
Rekindle the Franciscan spirit of interconnectedness with all of Creation;
Personal study and analysis of reality: see how migration, violence, conflict are issues connected to ecological degradation;
Purchase fair trade, energy-saving products;
Reflect on the Earth Charter;
Reflect on the theological underpinnings of ecological conversion;
Give a report about this conference at congregational gatherings;
Use time more wisely: it takes time and good planning to live in an ecologically sensitive way;
Take a Sabbath Day;
Develop materials for the Canadian Organization for Development and Peace, using the perspective of ecological conversion.

What do we need to do as communities/organizations?
For several Congregations, ecological conversion is a chapter mandate for reflection, study and action. Members of general councils chose to participate in this conference as a response to congregational directives;
Continued commitment to Solidarity with Southern Sudan — a tract of land will be used to re-educate local peoples in the re-discovery of agricultural skills following decades of war;
Share this information within the Congregation and with co-ministers, associates, etc. Use existing structures, such as JPIC groups, to develop strategies and initiatives for economic conversion;
A Letter will be prepared by conference participants to their congregational members — sharing personal insights and experience of the Seminar.
Network, collaborate with other groups, Congregations for ecological action;
Take concrete steps to integrate this vision of ecological transformation into life-long formation programmes.

16 May 2009

What do I leave with?
A connection with Congregations in Rome and the awareness of the influence that a group such as this can have in the area of ecological conversion;
My vision of the world has been broadened — feel connected, re-energized because of the presence of so many people who desire to make the Earth a home for all;
Connection with sisters in initial formation who minister in villages and can influence development of sustainable agricultural skills among the people of Sri Lanka – share summary of the reflections presented during the conference;
Energized by participating in an ecological Seminar in Assisi, where the spirit of France is palpable;
Commitment to read **Spirituality and Ecology** by Leonardo Boff — in order to continue deepening knowledge and praxis in relation to ecological conversion.

We take away a heightened awareness of many things:

· of inter-connectedness
· a re-awakened sense of urgency regarding the threat to the planet
· struck by the "Lifting up of Creation"
· a new impetus to get involved locally
· importance of networking capacity working together with other groups
· I took away a closer integration of spirituality and justice
· carbon footprint and costs involved
· I leave with a thirst to know more
· What we heard in this conference was scary
· simplify, simplify, simplify
· very grateful for what we have received
· there will be life-style adjustments
· new awareness of Eucharist prayers, need time to assimilate
· share ways of passing this on to others at home in Province/Congregation
· Denis Edwards' tone was so peaceful and not strident
· we are concerned about situations where there is violence or war and that ecological concerns may necessarily take second place
· do small things
· gratitude for what we received this week

Report n. 5

Wednesday, 13 May

Our group agreed that Denis Edwards' input was not only inspiring in its Christ-centric focus, but also challenging — particularly calling us to conversion regarding "closing the borders of our love". Some individuals felt that personal business puts paid to good intentions to re-cycle. Others have experienced personal invitations to deeper awareness, to experience awe at the beauty of Nature, at the mystery of Creation. We expressed our concern for the poor.

Generally, Congregations have expressed their concern for the ecological crises by their chapter decisions, direction statements, but implementation at a personal and communal level remains problematic. We appreciate Denis' emphasis on humility and the awareness, as it was expressed in the group, that "the poor save the world; the clever demolish it".

Thursday, 14 May

The talk this a.m. on "touch" and "ecology" touched us at many levels and sparked a deep and front conversation.

We shared our appreciation of the beauty of the Eucharistic prayers that Denis spoke of. We discussed ways to savour those texts — getting mass, celebrating mass: inadequate symbols. What about rice?

We spoke of experiences we had had in pastoral settings in Cambodia, Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Africa, even Rome. The richness of these experiences – where a

community of faith celebrated its painful history, its joys and pains – moved us, while the times an ordained minister celebrated Eucharist in a kind of triumph of ritual over relationship, filled many of us with sadness.

We noted the tensions that many women and some men feel around Eucharist and expressed our frustration at the hierarchy's refusal to tackle the issues of equality of women, shortage of priests and pastoral needs in mission and urban areas.

We affirm that the Eucharist belongs to the people and we pray it may unite and not divide our communities.

Report n. 6

Where am I personally in Ecological Sharing?

Many have shifted in how they use materials, asking 'what do I really need?'
I have become more aware of the level of pollution caused when discarding technology so I now use things as long as possible
Recapturing shower water for laundry/toilet, minimize use of water
Stop using plastic bags
Turn off passive electricity especially when leaving on trips
Don't print out all e-mails
Use both sides of paper; Recycle material
More aware of consequences to health in polluted areas
All form part of the DNA of the universe, destroying a part affects the whole; Negativity affects everyone around it
Use tap water instead of bottled water; Cultivate wildflowers
Live simply, use bicycle instead of car
Use of herbal medicines/compost

Difficult:

to find a balance; it is hard to watch destruction in some countries
to see lavish use of resources which are taken for granted
to live through catastrophic situations, like the *Tsumani*, knowing it could have been avoided

Pay attention to:

Travel, tie trips together so that ocean's and continents are not crossed too often
The urgency necessary when disasters happen – e.g., *Tsunami*, war, etc.
"The Universe Story" as a personal story
The challenge of raising awareness among people surrounding us
Having compassion with Nature

We are more evangelized by the culture around us than by evangelizing others

Where is my Congregation with this?

Ecological use of materials e.g., fuels
We have had enough talk. We are now acting and changing attitudes but we can't legislate conversion, slow response *vs.* urgent need
Ecology and the integrity of Creation have become part of our Chapter directives.
Appropriately using technology

Did carbon audit of properties; try to reduce by 3% yearly
Sharing what is being done in Green habit campaign
More attentive to use of natural resources
Partnering with other NGOs
Integrating respect for Nature/resources into prayer
Raising awareness of ecological issues via education
Had province leadership/formators reflect on *The Universe Story*

How can we bring out the Ecological Consequences of the Eucharist better?

Summary:
How do we celebrate Eucharist as communion with Nature?
How do we live Eucharist as communion with Nature?
How do we feel some sense of responsibility in catechizing on this topic?

This is a delicate conversation which could be viewed as insensitive and judgmental in parts of Africa or Latin America. Can it even be done within the Eucharist, perhaps outside of Mass? Communion of Faithful – what I believe in Eucharist as a sign of unity. Communion of all of Creation means how do I challenge, call the hierarchy to greater depth of understanding of the Eucharist? What are some moments during which we experience communion? How will I personally live with greater awareness how I live Eucharist? It is not sufficient just to be present.

Only in the Liturgy of the Word would an opportunity arise to reflect on ecological consequences. Structure of liturgy can depend on personality of priest; for some any slight variation could trigger canon law reference. Sometimes it appears that our Church is going backwards not forward. Term "Roman" Catholic has setbacks with rules. In Brazil there is participation.

In India festivals allow for integration of nature themes into Mass. In Sri Lanka, there are harvest festivals, canonists restrict innovation, offertory allows fruits of harvest,

Japan is a mission country. They "borrow things from other cultures but they haven't yet found a Japanese fit. Praying at shrines can be more meaningful.

In Indonesia, talking and sharing a meal is normal after Mass which sometimes contrasts with the mechanical saying of the Mass. Simply, poor people embrace Nature in the Mass.

What is my/my Congregation's concrete call to conversion?

Summary: we are being called to an attitude adjustment; we are not just guardians of the Earth but leaders responsible for moving this agenda forward. Having many Congregations doing this collaboratively make it easier. We are challenged by the balance between the parts of nature that are unhealthy for humans — vermin, etc. and protecting life in all it forms.

These three days were a challenge to rethink attitudes toward Creation, we are now "one with", not just "guardians of".

Challenge is to find a balance between fanatic on one side and mutually supportive of all: not only sustain my life but also sustain the existence of others.

How do we call the Government, people and systems to accountability?

Spend more time in contemplation of Creation – stretch self to re-examine what one considers to be pests

How do we include vermin, or spreaders disease in our contemplation?

Taking time to learn the names of things, how they work, what they do; on paper it is easy to study this, but how do we animate people to make it their own?

We need to grapple with the magnitude, urgency that moves us to action. We need: an expanding imagination; to choose new ways of living with deliberate choices about the use of natural resources. The collaborative approach is important retreat houses could offer reflections on this.

How does this affect our vowed way of life? Am I willing to expand my imagination, be more attentive to the interconnectedness of all, part of something bigger than self?

Ecological conversion becomes practical with saving things, but the call to right relationships, solidarity with those who suffer, becomes real when we bring those who suffer to the Eucharistic table.

Articles in our Congregational magazines, formation programmes and the witness of simply living are ways of outreach.

Naming, listening to other's stories, if the leadership is not ready to being this topic forward, it won't happen.

We are being called to conversion.
Old way: self as centre;
Now view enlarged: take time to see beauty and not merely rush through life.

How to be aware and improve even small decisions; getting in touch with hope. God can straighten crooked ways. Be open to this education and the implications of our choices.

Report n. 7

Wednesday, 13 May 2009

Congregationally, we are involved at different levels to do something about the ecological challenges. For some, it has been chapter mandates; others are involved at the UN level.

On the personal level, we are on a conversion journey. Again, individuals are at different stages in the conversion, from awareness raising, at home with nature, becoming conscious of the challenge, to personal commitment to do something concretely that is ecologically responsible, e.g. recycling, to the deeply mystical level of our interconnectedness with all of Creation: we are all made of star dust.

This has led to a campaign for a change in life-style, to live simply, to create awareness in others, to challenge the consumer world, to educate people, to improve garbage dumping, etc.

Thursday, 14 May 2009

Question: How can we bring out better the ecological consequences of our Eucharistic celebration?

We see the following needs:
1) Formation of presiders to raise the consciousness and awareness of the celebration to make the ecological connections better, "diskos" awareness.
2) Focus on the vocabulary used and a new awareness of what is there now, to be inclusive of ALL of Creation, to hear and be transformed by the words of the Eucharistic Prayers which notice the redemption of all Creation
3) Move to the fuller understanding of Eucharist as part of our everyday life, as continuous in our lives and therefore connect it to the whole of Creation and truly LIVE the "communion."
4) To be more intentional and notice how we personally celebrate, prepare to celebrate, and are attentive to mystagogy.
5) Deeper awareness in the consciousness of the "whole" and the greater respect for persons, for all of Creation will flow out

We suggest:
1) Presentation of Gifts — use more symbols, bring in the very gifts the Earth provides, celebrate prayers of gratitude, share the food gathered or share with the poor
2) General Intercessions — bring out the activity of all creation
3) Use the text of Chardin's "Mass on the World" at some point to raise the awareness of the community.

Our questions and further challenges:
1) It is a challenge to revitalize a celebration that also has a place for the traditions in ritual.
2) Can we sustain a level of deep intentionality for Eucharist on a daily basis?
3) When there is a "multiplicity" of Eucharistic celebrations, what does this say of "communion"?
4) How does the aspect of "time" influence my celebration of Eucharist? Personal values *vs.* insights?

Friday, 15 May 2009

Question n. 1: What do you think you need to do now on this journey of ecological conversion?

Many different people's ideas are presented here:

I need to continue the journey of conversion, make it on-going — more intentional, be more aware. I will catch the bus, walk, cut down on meat and packaged food, and I will shop locally.

When I travel, I'm going to combine trips.

I'm going to compensate nature for the offences I make to the environment. e.g. I will plant trees.

I will simplify my life: I won't buy what I don't need.

I'll collect and publish the activities that we're all doing.

I'll get myself in tune with the prayers of the Mass, especially the Eucharistic prayers, and I will deepen my awareness of our communion with the whole of Creation.

I'll raise money for a solar project that supports our Congregation's work.

I'll ask myself: Do my decisions act out what I say?

I will post the ideas from this Seminar to others through the *Shalome Network* and invite others to join in our efforts.

I will make what I've learned here part of my active theology and prepare for it as I approach the Eucharistic prayers.

I'll educate my hiking group.

I'll learn to embrace those parts of Creation that I don't like.

I will work to help develop a commercial re-cycling programme for our city.

I will get the Bishop of our diocese to co-sponsor an educational programme in regard to what we have learned here.

I will ask our City Council to introduce an ordinance for the city to stop using bottled water.

I will help educate our new Mayor regarding nuclear power.

When someone asks me about this Seminar, I will be ready with an answer that gives a real indication of what happened here.

Question n. 2: What does your group/Congregation need to do now in this journey of ecological conversion?

1) We need to touch the group gently (as in touching the Earth with gentleness) in bringing awareness.
2) We need to look at our Congregation's carbon print and see what we can do about it
3) We should beautify places
4) We could reflect together on what's been said and learned here.
5) We could bring all of this information to formation programmes — connect our knowledge with our theology
6) We need to *animate* the information from this conference.
7) I will push to make the theme of this Seminar the theme of our next General Chapter.
8) I will get the Congregation to reflect on its mission in the light of this Seminar.
9) We can use our schools and teachers to educate children and bring in the community.

French Working Group ....

13 mai, 2009

Sur le chemin de la conversion écologique, où en suis-je ?
Où si situe ma Congrégation ?

Le don de la création

La création est un don précieux de Dieu et cette prise de conscience nous apporte de la joie. Mais en même temps nous ressentons une grande souffrance en voyant la nature tellement maltraitée.

Par exemple, certaines expériences nous ont amenés à changer notre façon de voir l'eau, à lui porter plus de respect.

Une spiritualité de l'environnement, de la nature, des forêts est à développer.

Nos Congrégations

Une participante a mentionné l'option prise par leur chapitre général en rapport avec l'écologie, l'interconnexion avec la création, le cosmos et leur charisme.

Une question

Un grand ennemi de l'écologie est l'action des grandes multinationales dans plusieurs pays pauvres, pour leur propre profit et celui des gens des pays plus riches.
Que pouvons-nous faire pour dénoncer plus fortement cette réalité ?

Conclusion

Appel à poser des gestes courageux mais toujours avec amour.
L'information, l'éducation sont nécessaires pour susciter la passion pour le Christ, pour les humains et pour la terre.

14 mai, 2009

Les conséquences écologiques de notre célébration eucharistique.

Aider les chrétiens à s'ouvrir à cette dimension – les éduquer à cela

- Dans des groupes qui préparent la liturgie du dimanche comme au sein des communautés de base, faire en sorte que cette dimension soit clairement incluse. Un exemple de l'Église

d'Afrique est que dans une paroisse l'Évangile du dimanche des Rameaux a inspiré aux gens l'idée de ne plus malgraiter leurs ânes, animaux utilisés pour leurs corvés.

- Impliquer les chrétiens pour la prière universelle. En s'adressant eux-mêmes à Dieu, Père source de toutes les grâces, leur prière sera collée à leurs situations de vie et débouchera sur l'entraide, l'engagement pour la justice.

L'offertoire, moment approprié pour marquer nos liens écologiques avec la terre, le cosmos

- Offrande des prémices de la récolte, de nourriture ou autres objets à partager avec les plus démunis.

Initier nos gens au Temple qu'est la nature

- Célébrer en plein air quand cela possible.

Remarques

- Certains pays dont l'Afrique nous paraissent plus sensibles à une théologie proche du cosmos, des ancêtres qui conduit au respect, au partage, à la communion avec la nature.

- Dans tout cela, nous sommes appelés à la créativité.

15 mai, 2009

Qu'allons-nous faire maintenant?
Qu'est-ce que nos Congrégations vont faire? Quelle invitation?
Ce qui est le plus important?

Nous avons senti la convergence de l'action de l'Esprit dans le groupe et aussi à travers ce qui se passe dans nos Congrégations.

- Parmi nous quelques Congrégations ont déjà cheminé dans le sens d'un engagement écologique à la suite de leur Chapitre général. Les autres toutes, ont mentionné leur désir d'aller dans ce sens. Cette dimension sera incluse d'une façon ou d'une autre et clairement dans les prochains chapitres.

- Quelques Congrégations ont des projets avec des ONG et songent à orienter le prochain engagement avec eux dans un domaine qui touche directement l'écologie.

- Un de nous veut prendre du temps à l'été pour une étude plus approfondie de Teilhard de Chardin pour bâtir une spiritualité de l'écologie.

- L'écologie, la justice et tout ce qui s'y rapporte est à inclure dans nos programmes de formation à tous les niveaux.

- Le partage de ce qui se fait sur nos sites web est une manière très bonne pour entretenir le feu, pour motiver à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur aussi.

-Il y a aussi toutes les petites choses que nous devons faire, que nous pouvons faire

en rapport avec l'eau, les transports, nos achats, etc. Nous recommandons l'usage du document publié par JPIC dans un grand nombre de langues sur "La communauté de la Terre".

Le plus important pour nous maintenant, face à une urgence extrême…

- notre conviction personnelle
- partir de ce qui existe
- écouter les cris de notre monde déchiré
- être attentives pour discerner les signes de l'Esprit
- avoir du courage pour changer notre style de vie
- un engagement personnel, même si ce ne sont que de petites choses
- être liés avec des groupes de ONG ou à l'ONU. Nous engager au niveau politique (des congrégations se sont unies pour former un ONG),
- participer aux campagnes de signatures, aux manifestations…

Notre responsabilité vis-à-vis de la création entière est grande.

Nous avons senti de l'enthousiasme dans le groupe et la force de notre assemblée qui était importante.

Italian Working Group ....

Prima discussione e condivisione

- **Nel viaggio di conversione ecologica a che punto mi trovo?**
- **A che punto si trova la mia Congregazione?**

- Da tutti viene notato un certo scollamento (*gap*) fra ciò che diciamo e predichiamo sul rispetto del creato e ciò che effettivamente poniamo in atto. Nelle nostre comunità le pratiche di sobrietà e dei nuovi stili di vita non sono ancora interamente accettate. Si torna in Europa avendo avuto esperienze significative in altri paesi (con gli *indios*, con i netturbini urbani con cui si è costituita una cooperativa, a contatto con la desertificazione del Sudan, dove l'acqua è veramente un bene prezioso, ecc.) e ci si accorge dell'abuso che facciamo, come società, dei beni della terra.

- Viene affermato da tutti che non bisogna separare la spiritualità o la formazione alla Giustizia e alla Pace, dalla Salvaguardia del Creato. Anche nei percorsi di formazione è importante investire su tutti e tre i valori, ormai non separabili.

- Nelle nostre comunità si avverte che le persone impegnate maggiormente nell' "elevare" questa consapevolezza della salvaguardia del creato, vengono anche un po' emarginate dalla maggioranza, e si percepisce la fatica di sviluppare questa coscienza a causa di una certa resistenza.

- Il gruppo italiano fa notare che è bene riflettere sulla storia dell'universo e sulla teologia, che è alla base della spiritualità per l'integrità del creato, ma che bisogna farlo anche in merito al discorso sull' "ecologia umana" di Papa Benedetto (1° gennaio 2009) e cioè sui nuovi stili di vita che debbono coinvolgere tutti.

Seconda discussione e condivisione

- **Come possiamo fare emergere le conseguenze ecologiche nelle celebrazioni eucaristiche?**

- L'educazione ambientale ha compiuto dei passi avanti ben evidenti sia nel *curriculum* di alcune università, come l'"Urbaniana", che in quello formativo. Gli studenti provenienti da diversi paesi condividono volentieri le loro esperienze culturali. Viene sottolineato lo sforzo di far diventare forma di evangelizzazione e di pastorale, collegata ai sacramenti, anche l'ecologia e l'integrità del creato.
Anche in alcuni capitoli provinciali è presente questa spiritualità.

- Quelli che tra di noi hanno lavorato con i *Sem Terra,* hanno imparato a guardare alla vita e ai rapporti con il creato e con le persone contagiati dalla loro visione, che non è solo occupazione di terre.

Si fa notare che sono ancora progetti spontanei. Che Dio sia origine e fine ultimo della creazione è scontato, manca però una rete tra noi che ci permetta di sviluppare seriamente spiritualità pratiche conseguenti.

- Dobbiamo insistere che esistono anche i "peccati ecologici" contro la natura, nell'abuso delle risorse e nell'accumulo dei beni materiali. L'Eucaristia, poi, è una grande opportunità per sviluppare la dimensione relazionale e l'apprezzamento di tutto ciò che è dono di Dio. E' importante fare la connessione: assumendo il corpo di Gesù Cristo si assume tutto il creato, per la salvezza di tutti.
- La nostra visione religiosa è ancora legata al mondo rurale che è poi quello biblico … facciamo fatica a sviluppare una spiritualità che sappia entrare nel mondo postmoderno e industriale, e soprattutto fatichiamo a vedere le conseguenze del nostro stile di vita, che ha prodotto ferite e lacerazioni.

Terza discussione e condivisione

- **Cosa ci vuole per una seria conversione ecologica?**
Suggerimenti a livello personale e di Congregazione

- Il processo di conversione ecologica collettivo cerca quel 'pizzico di sale', di *gandhiana* memoria, che permetterebbe ad un mondo quasi assente di prendere coscienza e di cambiare stile di vita.
Non bisogna mollare, ma persistere, pur senza aggressività, proporsi sempre con piccoli passi concreti.
- La crisi economica e finanziaria di questi ultimi tempi potrebbe essere l'occasione per un "ritorno alla terra" con sistemi di autofinanziamento, ma anche per prendersi cura di sé stessi e trovare tempo, ed energia, per un contatto diretto con i nostri consumi.
- Appoggiare l'economia solidale con un'informazione chiara e accessibile alle nostre comunità.
- Richiamare l'attenzione all'ecologia delle relazioni, sottolineando la dimensione dell'essere su quella dell'avere. Dedicare tempo ed attenzione a coloro che ci sono vicini, ai rapporti interpersonali piuttosto che all'accumulo.
- Si sente il bisogno, oltre che di una nuova cristologia, anche di pneumatologia — la teologia dello Spirito Santo — con una rilettura della creazione da questa prospettiva.
- Si insiste che ci siano esperienze di ecologia e nuovi stili di vita nell'itinerario formativo.
- Il *Working group* proposto continui il suo coordinamento, per uno scambio di sussidi, proponendo forme di condivisione di risorse.

Spanish Working Group ....

1er pregunta: ¿ Dónde está tu conversión hacia la ecología?

. las diferencias de generación diferentes conversiones
. incertidumbre en tener de ecoespiritual
. el espiritu nos llama por echos divididos mundo eremos primos y la sensibilidad hacia los demos

. eco-espiridualidad = amor = sensibilizar

. volver a ver a la naturalezza (convincir con ella) nos abre los ojos hacia la conversión
. El activismo y la sociedad nos conduce a no atender al medio
. en las misiones nos damos cuenta del valor de la tierra, y como la necesitam para vivir. Los mas pobres la necesitan y nos hace cambiar de mentalidad.

. la eco-injusticia nos llera a la conversión
. nos vivimos al medio ambiente cuando nos demos cuenta y estimo hechos de la materia del medio.

2° pregunta: ¿ Cómo ve la eco-espiridualidad en su congregación?

. la eco-espiridualidad se diferencia según les paises o organos locales (norte/sur)
. perdidas de recursos en 3er mundo inquietud sobre el reclamo de medio ambiente
. la iglesia como organo istitucional global, no está organizada en esta nueva situación global
. dudas sobre como actuar y educar en eco-espiridualidad
. no se entroducen Buena Prácticas Ambiental en las Congregaciónes y por tanto no los hacemos …
esto conduce a que no los sensibilicemos
. las consecuencias del medio afecta a los injusticias del mundo
. el modo de vider afecta a la toma de decisiones
. en la congregación se han realizado acciones, para disminuir el consumo de bolsas de plástica
. los gobiernos de la iglesia están durmiendo y ausentes sobre el medio
. reto para animar la sensibilizaciòn y podes de acción
. en el medio y reto ambiental …

. cómo podemos entender mejor las consecuencias ecológicas sobre la celebración eucaristica
. hacer propuesta de declaración para nuestros superiores
. exigir a las curas a ... les realicen celebraciones
. hacer las mas visibiles
. la eucaristia ya tiene estructuras

. EDUCACIÒN SEMINARIOS REFLEXIÓN SOBRE ECOLOGÍA – TEOLOGÍA

. conectar mas la eucaristia hacia los simbulos, lecturas, etc., hacia el alto de la creación
. evitar contradiciones
. redescubrir la espiritualidad de la eucaristia
. apertura de la eucaristia hacia el medio natural (peticiones, simboles, vegetación, etc.)
. en la eucaristia exista la unión, la lucha, esfuerzo, etc., para el medioambiente
. solidaridad (acodarse en la eucaristia)

con las victimas del medioambiente

Al compartir las consecuencia ecologicas en la eucaristia, ha surgido la importancia de apoda la propuesta de Hno. Innocent Maganya, de hacer una carta abierta de los participantes de este seminario, para nuestro Hns/as de congregación, comisione, istituciones y otros organismos, para denunciar y animar acciones concretas sobre los temas aqui tratados.

LETTER TO RELIGIOUS

An Invitation to Lobby Governments on Climate Change

We, a group of 230 women and men religious and lay people from over 57 countries and representing 82 religious and missionary institutes, attending the Seminar on *"Creation at the Heart of Mission,"* organised by **SEDOS and the JPIC Commission of the USG/UISG**, are concerned about the increasing destruction of the life-systems of our planet. A recurring theme throughout the week was the call Pope John Paul II made in 2001 to all people, but especially Christians, to ecological conversion. In the run-up to the U.N. Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen from 7–18 December 2009, the Conference participants encourage you to lobby your national Governments on the issue of Climate Change. Many countries, especially in the Majority World (Global South) are already suffering the serious consequences, such as floods and droughts, of human-induced climate change.

We recommend you to Lobby your Government to commit itself to:
1. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by between 25% and 40% by the year 2020 and 80% to 90% by 2050 and to enshrine that commitment in legislation.
2. Making greater financial commitment to the Adaptation Fund as a matter of justice, despite the current economic downturn. (The Adaptation Fund has been set up by the UN to help poor countries adapt to the consequences of climate change).
3. Promoting economic justice globally as a way to mitigate the effects of climate change on the poor.

Further information can be found on climate change on several websites, especially at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - http://www.ipcc.ch/ - and reputable NGOs in your own country)[1]. You might consider supporting initiatives, regarding climate change, promoted by Church groups and NGOs.

We are all encouraged to become more involved in other pressing ecological issues such as the rampant destruction of biodiversity (God's creation) and the decreasing availability of potable water.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Conference Participants
Assisi, 16 May 2009

Footnotes

[1] CAN (Climate Action Network) Europe: http://www.climnet.org/;
CAN Canada http://www.climateactionnetwork.ca/e/
CAN U.S.A. http://www.climatenetwork.org/;
CAN Australia http://cana.net.au/;
CAN South Africa http://www.sacan.org.za/;
CAN West Africa http://www.enda.sn/;
CAN South Asia http://www.can-sa.net/;
CAN Central and Eastern Europe http://www.climnetcee.org/

LETTER TO RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

"Responding to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor is at the centre of Christian discipleship". This statement expresses our concern — two hundred and forty persons from eighty-two religious institutes, fifty-seven countries and five continents — as we gathered in Assisi from 12-16 May 2009. "**Creation at the Heart of Mission**" was jointly sponsored by **SEDOS and the JPIC Commission of the USIG/USG** where both religious and lay collaborators were led by theologians Séan McDonagh and Denis Edwards in considering ecology and our Christian life.

Séan McDonagh, SSC, gave us an understanding of the origins of the universe and the effects of climate change. We are aware that God's creative process is evolutionary and spread over a period of 13,7 billion years. This work of God is now being threatened by human activity and greed. Fires, droughts, extinction of species, destruction of forests, extension of deserts, the pollution of our oceans, and the melting of polar glaciers — all of these phenomena are indicators of climate change.

Ecology, economics and justice are intrinsically linked and the abuse of the Earth is a cry for urgent action, lest future generations inherit a sterile Earth.

Fr Denis Edwards took us back into the Scriptures to see how Jesus himself experienced Nature and loved it, and saw it as a revelation of God. He encouraged us to make an ecological commitment in our following of Jesus. A second conference on *Eucharist and Ecology* in which he noted for us the rich texts that refer to Creation in the Eucharistic prayers, called us to praise and thanksgiving for creation. And, as the Eucharist is a memorial of the Christ-event, so also God holds all that is created in *divine memory*, in such a way that even a sparrow that falls to the ground matters to God. The third presentation focused on HOPE and transformation (Rom 8:23). In terms reminiscent of Teilhard de Chardin, Edwards reminded us that our future involves a radical transformation of all matter in the Risen Christ. Edwards says that all created life — human and animal — will experience a deifying transformation, "The God of Resurrection Life is a God who brings individual creatures in their own distinctiveness *in some way* into the eternal dynamic of the divine communion".

We have been challenged to move from an "arrogant eye to a loving eye", to embrace a kind of "ecological conversion" in our attitudes and practices with regard to the Earth. We have been brought face to face with the reality of climate change, the exploitation of forests, minerals, the pollution of water sources and clean air, the unethical interests of transnational corporations that make farmers dependent upon those corporations for seeds. These realities affect all of us, and especially the most impoverished people — those least responsible for the Earth's degradation.

Inspired by this place — the Assisi of St Francis — we feel the call to embrace an ecological commitment, and assume a lifestyle that reveals our inner sense of oneness with the Earth and to the God who creates in Christ Jesus. We need to live a coherent lifestyle. We can only have a common future if we live now a *shared austerity* to ensure dignity for generations to come, that future generations may enjoy the beauty of this Earth, "the flowerbed of our dwelling" (Dante).

We recognize the commitment of many religious to promoting the integrity of creation. During the Seminar, some groups shared their experiences of working with alternative energy sources and promoting organic farming as well as creating ecological awareness in schools. We encourage religious congregations in their formation programmes, their liturgies, their own renewal programmes, and in apostolic engagements with youth, for example, to embrace this call to love the Earth and its creatures as God loves it, to integrate these insights into action in relation to the Earth and all that live upon it.

Let us join our voices and efforts with those organizations and movements that struggle to defend the rights of the Planet and the rights of the poor and marginalized, those threatened by the theft and violent dispossession of natural resources and living habitats.

We call ourselves to work with Church groups and civil society organizations to lobby Governments and international institutions to answer this most important need.

Recognizing our own ecological sins and complicity in the abuse of the Earth, we ask forgiveness and we propose our actions as means of reconciliation and solidarity.

*** Seminar documents:** http://jpicformation.wikispaces.com/EN_Assisi09

Basic information on GM strategy .....

Seán McDonagh, SSC

GM Crops Benefit Rich Corporations, Not the Poor

(22 March 2009)

On Monday, 18 May 2009, Matin Qaim will lecture on the Benefits of GM Crops for the poor at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences Study Week on "Transgenic Plants for Food Security in the Context of Development" in Rome. In his abstract he writes: "Among these benefits are insecticide savings, higher effective yields through reduced crop losses, and net revenue gains, in spite of higher seed prices".

Almost all of these claims are contested in the Friends of the Earth study: *Food Sovereignty: who benefits from GM Crops? Feeding the biotech giants, not the world's poor*. The Friends of the Earth study refutes the claim that GM crops lead to major reductions in pesticide use. In Argentina overall glyphosate use more than tripled from 65.5 million litres in 1999/2000 to over 200 million litres in 2005/6. In 2007, a glyphosate-resistant version of Johnsongrass (*Sorghum halapense*), one of the most damaging weeds in the world, had infested 120,000 hectares of the prime cropland in the country. Farmers are now using more toxic weedkillers such as *paraquat*, *diquat* and *triazine* to control weeds. It is estimated that 25 million litres of herbicides will be needed each year to control resistant weeds which, in turn, will increase overall production costs dramatically.[1]

The claims of a higher yield from GM crops are also disputed. The Friends of the Earth study state that "none of the GM crops on the market are modified for increased yield potential". Even the U.S. Department of Agriculture admits that "genetic engineering has not increased the yield potential of any commercialized GM crop". They point to a University of Nebraska study which attributes a 6% yield drag directly to unintended effects of the genetic modification process used to create Roundup Ready soybeans.[2]

The one certainty about GM crops is that they are making massive profits for biotech corporations such as Monsanto. The silence on this crucial matter from all who will speak at the Pontifical Academy event is staggering. Monsanto is the largest seed firm in the world. It now has almost a monopoly on biotech "traits" incorporated into GM seeds such as herbicide tolerance (HT) and insect resistance (IR). It also markets the Roundup pesticides. Because of this extraordinary control Monsanto's revenue is expected to increase by 74% between 2007 and 2010. In terms of money that involves a jump from $8.6 billion to $14.9 billion.

Despite these profits, seed prices have risen dramatically. The average price of soybean seed has increased by 50% in the past two years in the U.S. The company is expected to roll out a more costly version of their patented Roundup Ready soybeans (called RoundUp Ready 2) in 2009. This will further increase costs for farmers. Monsanto is also raising the GM corn seeds by $90 to $100 a bag in 2009. The Friends of the Earth Report claims that "the company (Monsanto) has also raised its trait prices for its less expensive single and double-stack corn seed more sharply than for triple-stack corn in order to move as many customers to triple stacks as possible, creating a captive customer base for the 2010 launch of its SmartStax octo-stack product".[3]

The retail price of Monsanto's glyphosate, Roundup has increased by 134% in less than two years. The revenue from Roundup in 2006 was $2.3 billion dollars so the further increase has brought hundreds of millions of dollars into Monsanto's coffers. A similar pattern has emerged in Argentina. At the end of 2007, the increased demand from agrochemicals coincided with a substantial rise in the price of Roundup when compared to the price of herbicides which are used on conventional crops.

The virtual monopoly position enjoyed by Monsanto has further negative consequences for U.S. farmers. Monsanto are now incorporating Roundup Ready traits into maize which until now had only been modified to be resistant to insect pests (Bt crops). Now the farmers find these crops have herbicide resistant traits as well. This "trait penetration" strategy means higher profits from selling the seeds and the herbicide. It also copper-fastens the farmers' dependence on GM traits and Roundup.

GM has made a fortune for biotech companies. Monsanto's monopoly position has meant that it can increase both the price of its GM seeds and herbicide even when food prices are increasing rapidly, thus pushing more and more people into poverty. They are also stacking traits in order to make more money.

How this technology which is owned by corporations can help the poor is beyond me.

Footnotes

[1] *Food sovereignty. Who benefits from GM Crops? Feeding the biotech giants, not the world's poor,* Friends of the Earth International, Issue 116, February 2009, P.O. Box 19199, 1000GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands. info@foei.org.> page 7.

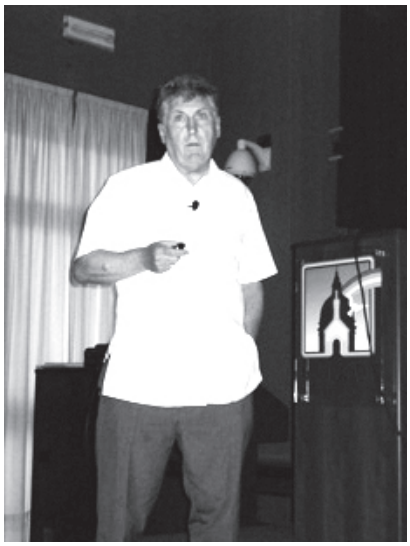
[2] *Ibid*., p. 7.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 6.

.... Some more photos

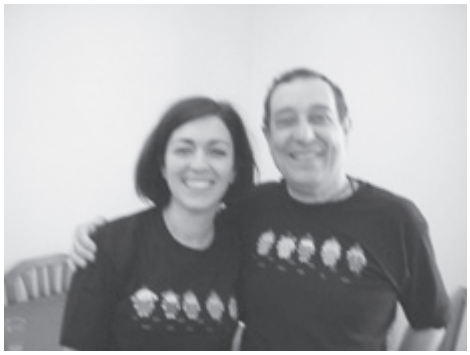
Fr Denis Edwards

The Aula Magna in 'Domus Pacis' (Assisi)



Fr Séan McDonagh, SSC

Gabe Hurrish (Assistant JPIC-USG/UISG) and Sr Celine Kokkat, JMJ (SEDOS Secretariat)



Carlos Rodríguez Linera (SEDOS Executive Director) and Ilaria Iadeluca (SEDOS Secretariat)

Fr Francisco G. O'Conaire, JPIC-USG/UISG General Secretary

THE RELIGIOUS OF ROME
IN COMMUNION WITH THE SYNOD OF AFRICA

The Spirit of Lord fills the African life, continuously whispering the liberating message of the Kingdom. The prophetic cries of the people resound with urgency through all the earth, calling on religious men and women to be instruments of the Spirit. Responding to this call, we religious wish to join in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who will participate in the Synod, reflecting and opening our minds and hearts to the Spirit's action.

OCTOBER: ROUND TABLES
Synod Of Africa
SEDOS - USG/UISG

10, 16, 24 October 2009

Theology and Experiences
The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace

Saturday 10: 9.00 to 12.00 a.m.
Prophetic Role of the Church in African Society
Kieran O'Reilli
Anne Béatrice Faye
Experiencial: Anatole, FSC and UISG

Friday 16: 3,00 to 6,30 p.m.
Role of Women in the Church of Africa
Edouard Tsimba
Jane Mukuko
Experiencial: Jesuit Refugee Center and Sr Redemptrix Chimutine, CPS

Saturday 24: 9.00 to 12.00 a.m.
Religious Life in Africa Today: What is our Role?
Gérard Chabanon
Elisa Kidané
Experiencial: Theóneste Kisala, FMS and UISG

Place: Brothers of Christian Schools, Via Aurelia, 476 – Rome

NEXT SEDOS RESIDENTIAL SEMINAR
"The Prophetic Challenge of the African Churches"

18-22 May 2010
Place: Ariccia "Casa Divin Maestro"