

Daniel's reflection for week beginning 10th July

SPIRITUALITY OF EVOLUTION

The American Astronomical Society recently awarded the Carl Sagan Medal to Jesuit scientist Brother Guy Consolmagno of the Vatican Observatory for being a 'credible spokesperson for scientific honesty within the context of religious belief'.

Many Christians are astonished at the revelations of twentieth century science, much of what is now known as the 'New Universe Story'. These revelations encourage us to reflect more thoroughly on St Thomas Aquinas' reminder that God is revealed in both the book of nature and of the Scriptures. For too long the two stories have collided with each other, often in a destructive rivalry. But both the love-story revealed in the orthodox theology of creation, and the emerging stories about our evolving world, speak of a fundamental inter-connectedness in our origins, evolution and destiny. Geologist Fr Thomas Berry writes, 'We bear the universe in our being as the universe bears us in its being'. In humanity the evolving universe becomes conscious of, and celebrates itself. And all of this is the incarnate unfolding revelation of the Being we call God. These glimpses of mystery challenge us. Current conversations between mystic and physicist, theologian and cosmologist are revealing undreamt of possibilities for the story of our faith.

Christians are called to a new level of consciousness about God's loving energy in the first 'flaring forth' nearly 14 billion years ago, and in the subsequent, on-going creative process of evolution since then. Every particle of creation is imbued with divine love-energy and is an incarnate expression of God's own creativity. A fundamental concept is that we all flow from one source, one relatively simple cell; some will see it as the process of evolution, others the work of the Holy Spirit. Theologian Elizabeth Johnson's challenging new book 'Ask the Beasts' seeks an understanding of faith that embraces the remarkable findings of science. 'Far from being in competition with the laws of nature acting around us, the hand of the God of love empowers the cosmos as it evolves. The world develops in an economy of divine superabundance, gifted with its own freedom, and in and through which the Creator Spirit's gracious purpose is accomplished'.

It may well be that our future lies not so much in an invisible heaven outside time but in this world clearly understood, lived and transformed.