

Franciscan Federation - Annual Conference 2013  
Minutes - July 20, 2013 - morning

*Franciscan Life in Evolution*

Welcome

Ann Lyons welcomed the participants to this Franciscan gathering. By evaluating our life from the past conference to this one, we will set a firm path forward, clearing away obstacles through deep listening and careful conversations.

Opening Prayer

*We remember the blessings of God.* This theme was carried out in song and participative prayer.

Introductions

Ann introduced two familiar faces: Kim Ritter of Nix and Associates is an "honorary member" of the Franciscan Federation. Ann spoke of her many attributes and capabilities. She especially mentioned Kim's embrace of areas of justice and peace. Her particular area of concern is human trafficking. Kim speaks with the hotel management every year to speak of this area. The members stood and applauded Kim.

Lynn Patrice Lavin was introduced as the facilitator. She has served in this capacity several times in the past. She has recently founded a counseling service company.

Ann then introduced the two keynote presenters. Keith Warner, OFM is a first time presenter at the AFC. Ann spoke of his credentials and accomplishments. He is an active participant in retrieval of Franciscan Intellectual Tradition. Ilia Delio, was also introduced. Ann told of her background, her accomplishments and her many areas of expertise. Both will speak of ongoing evolution in our lives

Keynote Presentation: Ilia Delio, OSF

Ilia spoke about evolution from the Big Bang to this very day and beyond. Evolution in our lives is real, necessary and ongoing and it speaks of God. Following are some of the comments she made. The list only attempts to relay pieces of the vastness of her knowledge and expertise.

- We are living in the midst of a major evolutionary shift (once every 500 years)
- Cosmology is the study of the whole order of things; religion, science, culture
- Our theology is part of a particular cosmology
- The name God is a cosmological notion
- Re religion - the Greek cosmos - is perfectly ordered with earth at its center-geocentric cosmos, metaphysics we come from God and go to God, cosmos of Middle Ages is static, fixed - traditional line of thinking
- Franciscans are attuned to the books of Nature and Scripture, Christ is the book of both, Nature mirrors Scripture
- New cosmology is Heliocentrism - Copernicus says we earth is not the center of the universe, the sun is the center; Galileo confirmed it.

- The Bible tells us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go.
- How will we understand sin if we are moving? Descartes made this worse through dualism; Newton was a deist - God directs a world machine;
- In 2013 we are still in Newton's world; religious life in pre-Vatican was extremely ordered- mechanistic, keep the rule and the rule will keep you; pray-pay-obey
- The rise of a sun-centered universe caused separation between the book of Nature and the book of Scripture thus separating science from theology = separation of the book of Christ!
- New Cosmology: God and cosmos belong together; it is old, large, dynamic and interconnected. Ilia explained each of these qualities in further detail.
- "We are the universe and the universe is us." Ilia Delio
- Basic tenets of quantum physics: Ilia explained several basic concepts of quantum physics
- Closed systems vs open systems, open systems are open to change and spontaneity where growth can occur
- Chaos theory was explained simply - a strange attractor is a change in a part of a pattern, changing it to a new pattern, each strange attractor is a fractal; they can have enormous effects on society;
- Morphogenetic fields - the more we have a pattern it forms a field and the more easily it can be replicated; a new form may tune into a previous system through a similarity "seed."
- Quantum entanglement - two interchanging particles are separated, one is manipulated, the other automatically changes also; this shows shared consciousness;
- As humans we seem separate but in our roots we are part of an indivisible cosmos
- The universe is in evolution! static to dynamic; fixed to changing; mechanistic to process order; evolution is a process, more than biology; nature is playful and spontaneous
- Evolution is the rise of consciousness, awareness;
- Evolution is an unfinished process - creativity, novelty, and future will drive evolution; need to be open to infinite opportunities
- The foundation of things is the power of attraction to what lies ahead
- Cosmotheandricism: a dynamic universe reflects a dynamic God; God's love spills over any being
- Christ is evolution: what is the meaning of Jesus the Christ in a world still coming to be? 3 Franciscan values: primacy of Christ, virtue of "catholicity," creation as family
- Every act of creation is an act of incarnation; to be created is to be in relationship
- Chardin says evolution is Christ-in-the-making; cosmic personalization; Christ is newness in evolution
- catholicity - the principle of "wholemaking"; catholic = according to the whole; catholic is gathering together what is fragmented or separated; Jesus was catholic in this sense
- Jesus' death releases the Spirit for a new creation - Resurrection
- Creation is becoming a cosmotheandric unity of love
- Christianity is and has always been future-oriented, Jesus establishes a pattern of evolutionary life; out of the old is born the new

- We are on the cusp of an evolutionary breakthrough and will be viewed in the future by the decisions we make, by being wholemakers, by living in the primacy of love;
- Life is ahead of us; what is "new" breaking in our midst? Are we making greater wholes through our relationships?

Lynn thanked Ilia, bringing the first part of the session to a close.

Break

Response: Keith Warner, OFM

Keith presented remarks in response to Ilia's presentation. In many ways he summarized the main components of her presentation. Following are some of his comments:

- How does her message help us as Franciscans? It helps us to understand the micro and macro universe
- Wisdom, primacy of Christ, catholicity, and creation as family - Franciscan values of Ilia as mentioned above.
- Incarnation is a theocosmological event; it is connected to the primacy of Christ;
- The catholic imagination helps us carry forward the primacy of Christ in evolution; Francis is a good example of this;
- We must overcome false dualism of our age; need to weave together wholeness and unity, in a dualistic society

Carrying forward the relationship of faith and science:

- How can Franciscans dialogue with science? We are not afraid of science; we see generative elements of God.
- We can contribute wisdom to what others lack. Natural scientists explain nature but science cannot explain the why of nature; Love, goodness and meaning do not fit into science. We can bring those to the discussion.
- Do we love, recognize, pursue, invite, share wisdom?
- We need to discuss these with scientists, to show purpose, meaning and love. Good questions about life, ethics, ... give interest to scientists;
- We can talk about resources, matters of matter, measurement, mechanistic things with how to communicate with rich language for love, common good, ethics, relationships..
- Engage students with more ways of thinking than mechanistic ways

After Keith's presentation, Lynn invited the participants to quiet reflection on the two presentations with table discussion to follow. Cards were distributed for questions to be written for the speakers to respond to.

Ilia addressed questions or made fuller explanations by themes:

- A major question revolved around sin and evil. Resp: life is cruciform with suffering, death and resurrection; sin is living in the exile of unrelatedness, incompleteness; sin prevents us from being fully engaged in relationships; evil is a choice against good

- Morphogenetic fields: patterns of relationships create form; something interjected, strange attractors, into a form creates a new form; there can be multiple or competing forms; as we are engaged with the environment, we create patterns of relationships and the brain changes, old patterns die; entanglement means we are not alone, we affect one another, create a consciousness of the whole;
- How do we move into a new structure? we work hard at it; need to have fun with possible new ideas - "have a few drinks, play golf"; everything is evolutionary and will die so have fun while dying!!!; live life and stop thinking about dying!!!
- The old is coming to an end and it is okay; the past is taken up into the present and reformed for the future; ask yourself - what do you hope for?; we need to live in the present.
- Love is never a mathematical equation or a scientific problem; what is the love energy in your life? life is ageless;
- Touch, feel, wake up your senses; if we do not wake up, the rest of the world has a plan and it does not include God. We must live actively.

Lynn thanked both Ilia and Keith for their remarks. It was a graced time for us.

Lynn made several announcements regarding the commissions assembly places, lunch and others

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During the afternoon, the commission assemblies and elections took place. Each is scheduled to make a presentation on Sunday afternoon.

A festive liturgy was celebrated by the whole assembly at 5 pm. This was followed by a free evening for the participants. An optional DVD on Human Trafficking was shown for interested participants.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sr. Jean M. Cherry, FSSJ  
Recording Secretary