

## Franciscan Federation Conference 2013

### “Franciscan Life in Evolution”

In his *Collations on the Six Days of Creation*, Bonaventure remarked that the first Book of Revelation was the Book of Nature. Because of sin however humans became blind to the Book of Nature and were given the Book of Scripture to read. Christ, he said, is the Book written within (Scripture) and without (Nature). The Psalmists based their poetry on the beauty of nature, for example, the well-known Ps 8: “When I look at the heavens and the stars which You arranged, who are we that You care for us?” Like the Psalmists, Bonaventure highlighted the widely held traditional belief that creation is the primary place of divine revelation: Creator is revealed in creation. Francis of Assisi was a lover of creation and Bonaventure said of him that “in beautiful things Francis saw Beauty itself and made of each and every thing a ladder on which to climb up to the Beloved” (LM 9.1).

The word “creation” is a religious term that connotes a “Creator.” The non-religious synonym is “nature.” Nature reveals divinity; it is a “book” and “mirror” that reflects divinity. The two fundamental pillars of modern science are evolution and quantum physics. We will spend some on these two pillars to understand their importance us.

Then we ask, what does the new science today tell us about God? What does it tell us about ourselves?

To address these two questions we will look to the Franciscan theological tradition which holds rich values that speak to our modern world of science. These values can be identified as:

- 1) Nature is good. Love is at the heart of the cosmos
- 2) Nature is relational. Relationality defines the fundamental fabric of the cosmos.
- 3) Nature has purpose. Christ is the pattern and motif of evolving nature
- 4) Nature has aim. Evolution is not a blind, random process but one of increasing complexity. Teilhard de Chardin spoke of this as cosmic personalization. Bonaventure spoke of the cosmic Christ. Francis’s *Canticle of Creatures* provides a model of what a christified universe looks like.
- 5) What does nature teach us? Essentially how to evolve, that is, how to go forward in openness, spontaneity, freedom and relationality. Ken Wilbur described Francis of Assisi as “the growing tip of evolution”. We will explore what it means to be at the growing tip of evolution, following the footprints of Francis.