

# EVERYTHING!

Madeline Duckett, RSM

**W**hat do new understandings of cosmology and their impact on Christian theology have to do with such things as our service to persons who are poor, how we live in community, or how we pray? When I shared this question with a friend, her reply was: "Everything!"

The underlying consciousness we hold affects everything in our daily living. Just as the operating system of a computer enables all programs within it to function, so when evolutionary consciousness with its Christian implications becomes our "default setting," everything in our lives is stretched towards larger meaning, purpose, and a new urgency to action.

deepening of inner motivation, reading and honest discussion around what is unfolding, and action that flows from the emerging new vision.

Today the emerging vision is one of a cosmos in process of evolution. It leads us to new understandings of who Christ is in light of this, and what we are called to be and do in the world as a result. Through the gifts and capacities that have unfolded in us as women religious over the years since the foundation of each religious community, we have something valuable to offer a world changing exponentially. The works we do in reaching out to those in need, the

the personal, the relational, and the deeply spiritual in a world teetering on the edge of self-destruction or new creation, of "breakdown or breakthrough." (2) As such we can be the yeast of the feminine in the dough of an emotionally detached, technological world. Consequently, there is an urgent need for us to take hold of the new evolutionary consciousness with its implications for Christianity, and live more intentionally from this awareness, offering our gifts to the world we are committed to serve.

The challenge is how to develop this consciousness that will affect everything, and make it real and tangible in a world groaning in its current crises at the



Continuing to develop and sustain this larger consciousness, to live from it and spread its message is a new call in our times. We as religious are well placed to respond. Having "reinvented" ourselves in the wake of Vatican II, we have learned something about the painful process of transforming consciousness and manifesting this transformation outwardly. The process requires a new seeing arising from contemplation, a

networks we have developed, our deeply embedded charisms, and our commitment to the More (1) are much needed gifts we have to offer.

As scientific discoveries and developing technologies catapult us towards possibilities and challenges of which we never dreamed, religion, and particularly women religious, have an important part to play. We are bearers of the feminine,

macro and micro level. The following are practices that some women religious are finding helpful.

## Evolutionary Awareness Groups

**S**ome are gathering in small groups to focus, develop, and deepen their evolutionary consciousness with its Christian implications. Members of these

groups find support in meeting regularly to listen to speakers via all the technological means available today; read books and articles by such writers as Teilhard de Chardin, Raimon Panikkar, Beatrice Bruteau, Ilija Delio, OSF; and others. Discussing, clarifying, and contemplating together helps extend and deepen understanding of difficult concepts. Beginning to read the scriptures with evolutionary eyes helps to uncover new meaning in familiar passages that can point to and affirm what is unfolding. Within such groups people choose ways of making aspects of this understanding more practical in daily living and share what happens for them when they do so. In all of this, group members strengthen their

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grasp of the fact that we are involved in a larger process of cosmogenesis and Christogenesis (3). Thus the morphogenic field (4) that can shift consciousness and behavior on a larger scale ripples out to those beyond the group.

### The Primacy of Love

Teilhard's scientific and philosophical conclusion that the whole of cosmic unfolding is powered by a personalized center of Love which draws everything towards greater wholeness, sheds new light on Jesus' injunction to love one another. (5) As they grow in seeing Love as the power at work in developing consciousness and in evolutionary unfolding, some women religious are endeavouring to live life more consciously from this primary Christian stance. More aware of those with whom they live and interact in community and ministry, these women choose to be more positive and less critical of others by intentionally seeing their companions through the lens of pure Love. Though not easy at times, this can cut through the veils that often cover the inner truth of each person. The

practice is accompanied by examining oneself at the end of the day by asking a single question: how have I allowed Love to flow through me today and where have I blocked it? A simple but powerful consciousness-raising means for living the profound teaching of Jesus, Teilhard de Chardin, and others!

This one yardstick holds good also for the way we view the world at large. It takes a genuine discipline of heart and mind to see beyond the ugliness and violence of our world and behold its core beauty. The media does not help. We hear and see so much bad news happening around us. To seek the good at the heart of all and to focus on acts of love and kindness rather than on negative stories and emphases is a daily choosing of life rather than death. This too can be part of the awareness examen at the end of our day.

### Essential Relatedness and Prayer

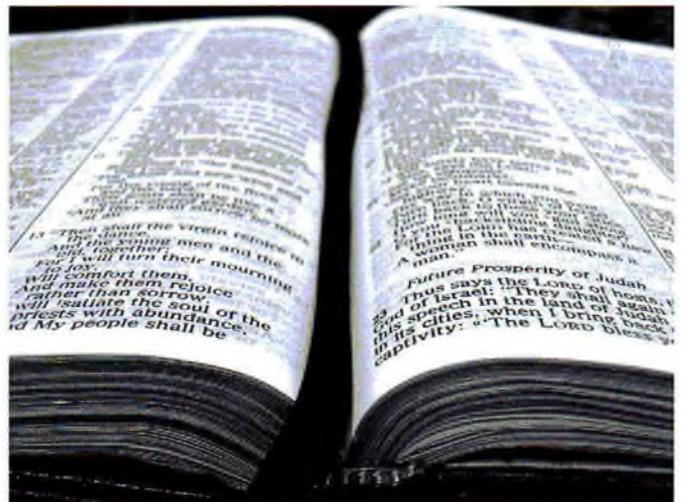
Seeing the interconnectedness and hidden beauty in everything requires contemplative awareness and practice. To slow down and regularly become aware of the essential relatedness of all things in a single center of Love is a powerful means of living Christian evolutionary consciousness. As women religious we have practiced this "art" for years as we sat in prayer for our own needs and those of the world. Scientifically, through theories such as quantum entanglement, (6) we now know that everything in the universe is deeply con-

nected. Movement of one thing will affect change in another, even at vast distances. This realization scientifically grounds our confidence in the power of positivity and love as necessary aspects of the "default setting" of our lives.

Prayer and contemplation are critical avenues for developing this awareness. As we sit daily in contemplation before entering the activities of our day, we slowly develop eyes that can see Christ "shining diaphanously through every creature of the universe." (7) This is the seeing of the mystic, (8) and now is the time for mystical consciousness to rise in everyone, as we grow into living from the perspective of the larger whole.

Many sisters are unaware that, over the years of regular prayer and committed service, they have developed deeply mystical hearts. Others can see it in them, especially in some older sisters who are simply transparent with Divine Presence. Aging may be physical diminishment but it is also a time of releasing Spirit from deep within, and a further call to mission. As science demonstrates our deeper connectedness through the strands and waves that link everything, we know that we influence the larger world whatever our age. This understanding was the source of a now growing group of people of all ages who are becoming part of the Contemplative Evolution Network (9) -- a network of people committed to participating in changing and evolving the world by means of united consciousness, prayer, and intention.

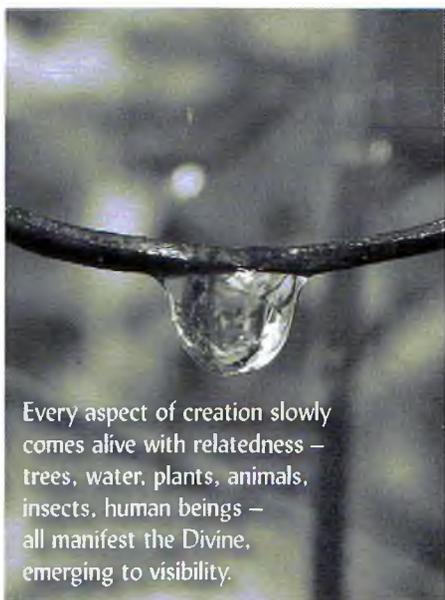
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## Union Differentiates – Community and Ministry

As we develop the discipline of seeing others in their essence -- as pure Love at their core -- and as we sit daily in that Love in prayer, a deeper sense of union begins to penetrate our consciousness. Every aspect of creation slowly comes alive with relatedness – trees, water, plants, animals, insects, human beings – all manifest the Divine, emerging to visibility. Yet even as we are drawn into this broader, deeper sense of union we become more aware of our differences. The regular practice of holding both of these movements in balance by refusing to compare ourselves or compete with those around us, or be critical of others' difference, seeing it rather as a gift to the whole, can be a helpful means of deepening union of mind and heart. Living community becomes appreciating the different giftedness of others who are not separate from but part of the larger whole of us. (10) Diversity of ministries becomes an expression of the rich offering that we, as a group of committed, purposeful women, make to the world around us.

Though I may feel alone at times, I can work on seeing my community as a whole within other wholes, of which I am an essential part. (11) To daily choose to live from seeing the larger whole first and then to see my separate part in it, requires practice. As our consciousness of



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union in diversity grows, we can rejoice in both our “we-ness” and our individual gifts that enhance the larger whole and ultimately contribute to evolutionary unfolding.

Disciplining ourselves to see in this way can lead to a renewed awareness of mission. We come to behold the world at its core, and know that it is not an evil to be avoided, but good in its very essence. We immerse ourselves in the world to enhance and yeast that essential goodness. This can be done in simple ways such as personalizing impersonal environments. A small word or smile to someone on the street or at the supermarket checkout can be an act of yeasting – a spreading of relatedness and pure Love. Through all of this, we minister to others, both in community and in our ministry, seeing beyond the wounds and ugliness and calling forth the true heart of each part of creation, human and otherwise, just as Jesus did.

### Conclusion

Today we are being stretched to a new consciousness that has potential to give birth to a renewed and vibrant expression of our original purpose as women religious. This consciousness affects everything. How we see ourselves and our world conditions how we act, who we are, and how we interact with it. Today, as we serve others, as we live our lives in communities of faith, as we pray and touch the deeper Source, we become women with a much larger purpose than we ever imagined. We help evolve the world and the cosmos towards the ultimate revelation of the Christ who is at the heart of all.

The challenge is how to develop this consciousness and let it permeate and motivate our lives. It requires openness to change and to new vision. It requires being creative about how we reinforce this consciousness, both individually and together, and find ways to live from it. Nice ideas are not enough. In our communities and in other groups to which we belong, we can call one another into this awareness. By reflecting on our experience and shaping our living accordingly, we can contribute to an unfolding

theology, spirituality, and church that are vital, alive, and relevant to a fast-changing world.

When the consciousness is there, the rest will follow and all of creation will be lit up from within. Everything will take on deeper, larger meaning. Eucharist will be a cosmic event in which we are slowly transformed into the greater Body of Christ and strengthened to go out to manifest more clearly the diaphanous presence of Christ everywhere. Death will be a releasing of spirit into the larger whole of Christ forming in the world womb. It will be a dying into Love, knowing I have done my part in bringing life around me to greater wholeness, and that I hand over a precious gift to

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others who will take the evolution of fully manifested Love forward to its next unfolding.

Love does change everything! Raising consciousness of God as the Love-energy at the heart of cosmic unfolding, and fully revealed in Christ, is our ultimate purpose in life and in death.

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### Endnotes

1. Barbara Marx Hubbard, keynote address at the 2012 LCWR assembly. In this address Barbara speaks of characteristic qualities she has noticed that women religious have evolved for the church and the world during the past 100 years - qualities we ourselves may not be aware of having. The final characteristic she names in her list of 10 is “commitment to

seeking the More – the God ahead in an ever evolving world”

2. Ibid
3. Ilia Delio, *The Emergent Christ*. Maryknoll, NY, Orbis, 2011. p. 53. “The biological and cosmological genesis of creation is from the point of faith christogenesis” and p. 53 “God coming to be at the heart of matter”
4. Judy Cannato, *Field of Compassion*. Notre Dame NY, Sorin, 2012. p. 30. “A morphogenic field is a non-material region of influence within and around a particular form. It is a field of information...” and behavior.
5. John 15:12
6. Ilia Delio, keynote address at the 2013 LCWR assembly. Ilia describes how synchronistic events can be seen scientifically as the result of quantum entanglement whereby, as Einstein showed, “split particles can influence one another immediately and at huge distances”
7. Ilia Delio, *Christ in Evolution*. Orbis NY. 2008. p. 80
8. Karl Rahner, *The Practice of Faith, A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality*. Crossroads, NY, 1982, p. 22. Rahner’s familiar quote is relevant here: “The Christian of the future will be a ‘mystic,’ one who has experienced ‘something’ or he will not exist at all.” It appears in the context of describing the human being’s deep connectedness with God who is the Ground of all being. Awareness of our connectedness with God as Ground is rising in many today as we move more deeply into this new age.
9. The Contemplative Evolution Network is comprised of people who are committed to contemplative awareness – either in focused prayer alone or with others, or in simple attention and intention between 4 and 5 PM each day. Anyone of any age in any geographical location can unite through prayerful attention to the Source of Love at the core of all things. Consciously uniting with this Source and with those who are sitting contemplatively for some or all of the hour, they direct that Love towards healing whatever part of the world seems most in need at the

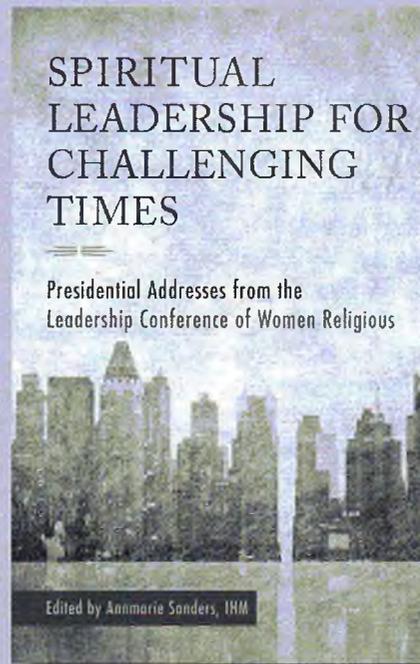
time. A website for the CEN will be available early in 2014. [www.comtemplativeevolutionnetwork.com](http://www.comtemplativeevolutionnetwork.com)

10. Cannato, pp. 32 – 33. In this section Judy Cannato describes how... “nothing is a whole apart from other wholes.....A whole person is part of a whole community”
11. Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being, God, Evolution and the Power of Love*. Maryknoll, NY, Orbis, 2013, pp.17 – 35. In Chapter 2 of her book she describes the hidden wholeness that exists in nature and how separate parts relate to one another in a web of networks and systems.



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## New Book to Be Released



This spring Orbis Books will release a collection of 10 LCWR presidential addresses, entitled *Spiritual Leadership for Challenging Times*. Beginning in 1978 with the reflections of Joan Chittister, OSB on the changing models of religious life, followed by the 1980 address on the role of women in the church by Theresa Kane, RSM, these speeches reflect a period of momentous changes in the church and society. They conclude with the speech of Pat Farrell, OSF in 2012. Throughout these addresses, readers will find ideas and inspiration to formulate their own understandings of the type of leadership needed in the world and church today.

Watch the LCWR website for information on ordering: [www.lcwr.org](http://www.lcwr.org)