

An Interview with  
*Ilia Delio, OSF*  
Seeing Christianity as  
a Religion of Evolution  
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# The Implications for Religious Life

**Ilia Delio, OSF** is a senior research fellow at Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University where she concentrates in the area of science and religion. The author of 11 books including *Christ in Evolution* and *The Emergent Christ: Exploring the Meaning of Catholic in an Evolutionary Universe*, she holds a doctorate in pharmacology and a doctorate in historical theology from Fordham University. LCWR associate director for communications **Annmarie Sanders, IHM** interviewed Ilia on how insights and new understandings of the universe and evolution can be interpreted from the Christian tradition.



*Ilia Delio, OSF*

**Q** Would you speak on how the new understandings of the universe connect with the Christian tradition?

The connection between Christianity and cosmos has been very much a part of our tradition – at least up to and through the Middle Ages. If you go back to the early church, you see that theology was

based on cosmology. In the Middle Ages to study theology one had to know the natural sciences, including geometry, physics, astronomy -- all the sciences. Even Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure referred to the stars and astrology in their writings. After the Middle Ages, especially after the Reformation, people became focused on doctrine. I think we have lost sight -- and consciousness -- that there can be no real theology without cosmology. In a sense, the new universe story is pulling us back into a more authentic way of doing theology, since we have become too abstract in our theological thinking.

**Q** For people who struggle to see these connections, what can you recommend?

I recommend doing two things. First, read up on the tradition and how theology was done in the early church and in the Middle Ages. Augustine, for example, spoke of the footprints of God in creation, and Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas spoke of creation as a book and a mirror. Second, be awake to what science is telling us today. I think women in general are doing much better at deepening their understanding of science than men. Men seem to want to keep the new science at a distance and do not engage it as women do – which is a very interesting phenomenon. There is a significant amount of literature today that translates the new universe story into terms that we can really grasp. We need to keep reading and keeping up with science which is moving at such a rapid pace. This is due in part to technology which is developing exponentially.

Today I think we need a new turn, what I am calling “the turn to the cosmos” or “turn to the whole.” As we had “the turn to the subject” in the Enlightenment, now we need to turn again. Our thinking about everything needs to be done within a cosmological framework. The way we think about God, grace, creation, salvation, heaven, hell, violence, hap-

piness, suffering, and joy needs to be done within a wider context, because life unfolds in a wider context. I think the old adage applies here: practice makes perfect. The way we can make this turn is by practicing and encouraging one another to broaden the context of whatever we talk about, think about, or pray about.

**Q Would you give an example of how we might do this?**

I think we tend to get very focused on particulars, which is not a bad thing. But it is helpful to stretch our thinking. Let's take salvation as an example. When we talk about salvation, what exactly do we have in mind? Most people would associate salvation with Jesus saving us by dying on the cross. If we expand our thinking from there to think about salvation in terms of the evolutionary universe, then salvation moves beyond Jesus saving me from sin. Perhaps we can see salvation as God's love at the heart of the cosmos that heals, makes whole, and generates new life. This love is visibly expressed in the cross of Jesus Christ. As we are healed and made whole by God's love, we, in turn, can promote greater wholeness in our communities in our world. This does not negate sin but it puts sin within the wider context of the whole cosmos. Sin is living in unrelatedness or disconnected from the whole. An emphasis on salvific love means that Christ does not save us from the world; Christ is the reason for the world. It is love not sin that brings about unity in God.

Another example of getting too focused and missing out on the bigger picture is the way many religious communities worry about their future. Recently, a religious community asked me to talk with them about dying because membership is declining and aging. Members are saying, "Okay, we have lived all these years and now we are dying, and how do we make sense of it all?" We need to look at death within the context of an evolutionary universe, where life evolves through death and resurrection. One can look at a dying community in two ways. Yes, you are dying out historically and whatever work you have done will live on in someone else. Or, you can look at dying as a

participation in this unfolding evolutionary story and see that your life and your works have always been part of a larger whole. The fact is, every aspect of life has moments of death and resurrection. We are dying all along the way. But in a participatory universe, every death is the beginning of new life; every end is a new arrival. A community may be dying but something new is being born. We need to shift our focus to the new births that are taking place in quiet, hidden, and, perhaps, non-traditional ways. So even though a community may be dying here in the now, it has contributed energy and consciousness and a spirit of life that is being taken up and used to birth a new future. Death is not an end if we believe in the resurrection; it is participation in something larger than ourselves. We can get weighed down by what seems to be aging and dying but I am encouraging us to stretch our vision because we are living in an expanding universe—and it is quite exciting.

**Q LCWR has been engaged in a contemplative process that calls its members to be alert to "the new" that is emerging in the universe, the planet, the church, and religious**

**life. The conference members are also challenging themselves to stay open to perceiving the realities of the world today in new ways. You have noted that the key to the evolution is openness to being influenced by the environment. What are some of the new influences that you would encourage women religious and particularly LCWR to explore?**

We have two ways of looking at things -- as closed systems or as open systems. We can look at our lives and say, "Our foundress started this community in the late 19th century and a lot of women joined. We all contributed our lives and worked wholeheartedly, and now we are all elderly, no one is entering, and we seem to be dying out." That's a closed system because we have a box into which we put all our energy and the box has now used up all its energy and nothing new can happen. An open system, on the other hand, is open into the environment. It never really has an equilibrium point or reaches a point of perfect balance; in fact, chaos is its saving grace. In an open system, something new can happen. Its openness to the environment means that the system responds to changes in the



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environment by reorganizing itself. An open system has the capacity for newness, that is, for new basins of attraction to arise within the system and pull it, over time, in a new pattern of life. Chaos theory means that new order can arise out of what seems to be disorder because the system exists far from equilibrium, is open to environmental influences, and can produce new patterns of behavior. Chaos is good and accounts for many of the beautiful patterns of nature such as cloud formation or leaf formation. It also means that small changes can amplify and have profound effects. Out of chaos, stars are born.

If we think of ourselves as open systems, we can view our history like this: "Our foundress began our community and it has always been a little chaotic as time unfolded, as social conditions changed, and the church changed with Vatican II. We have been attentive to the signs of the times, and now we see the needs of women in the Third World or we see that we are living in a Muslim neighborhood, or that our pluralistic world calls us to new patterns of relationship." In this view, we are looking at the environmental influences in which the community finds itself and, being open to the environment, the community can reorganize itself in relation to the environment in order to deepen relatedness.

Evolution is a process of moving toward more complex life, that is, a greater degree of relatedness, more consciousness, and deeper union. Sometimes in our closed systems we just don't have the consciousness to see that we are being drawn to new relationships which would mean new life for us. This is where I see people getting stuck. It is important to attend to what is happening in our midst, what are the new patterns of relationship that are drawing us to something new and deeper, that is, more love, more relatedness, more Christ-like. This is how we move from a closed system to an open system.

I think all of culture and society is calling us today to enter into new patterns of relationship. Technology has ushered in a consciousness of globalization where we find ourselves aware of a diversity

of people around the globe. What does this mean for us as Catholic Christians? John Haughey, SJ has defined the word "catholic" as whole-maker. We are to be whole-makers in this globalized world.

So, what does this mean in terms of where we are going? The key, I believe, is a spirituality of interior freedom which enables us to let go of the past and engage the future. Together we are discerning new attractions, the Spirit of God is seeking to create anew in our lives, calling us to new relatedness and new wholeness – and these new movements will require letting go of what we have known and creating the future. The letting go does not mean forgetting the past. The past has brought us into the present moment and it is good. We cannot live in the past, however. To "let go"

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is "to let the dead bury their dead" and to follow Christ. It is to put new wine into new wineskins. The gospel life is about a new future in God.

Part of the difficulty is that our culture does not deal well with death. We want to avoid it, put it on hold, but every time we make choices there are deaths occurring. We may not be conscious of it. The Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, once said, every choice is a thousand renunciations. Francis of Assisi said "Blessed are those who endure the first death, for the second death will do them no harm." If we learn to die well we can embrace life more freely and fully. So we need to develop a consciousness of life that includes letting go; death – not as a finality – but as a transformative process.

**Q** You note that Karl Rahner, SJ says God empowers creation to become more than it was. You also note that Teilhard de Chardin, SJ described God as the God of the future, the ultimate force of attraction for the universe who draws the universe toward greater intensification of complex-

ity and new creation. Would you speak more about your understanding of the God of the future and to what it is that God is drawing us?

On one hand, I think we need to trust God more wholeheartedly. We talk about Incarnation -- that God is one with us -- but we still live with an inherent dualism and the primacy of our attention is toward divine transcendence. If we truly believe that God has humbly bent down to enter into union with us and that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, then nothing should deter us from living freely in God. In an evolutionary universe, nothing is complete which means God is still creating; the Spirit is creating anew and we are part of this new creation that is taking place in our midst. Resurrection should free us to live Christianity as a religion of evolution; belief in the risen Christ empowers us to go forth unimpeded by the forces of history. We believe that death does not have the final word, that life is the final word because it is the Word of God.

I am beginning to write a book on God, evolution, and the power of love – based on my study of Teilhard de Chardin. I am seeing that the work of shifting our consciousness to the new cosmos story begins with how we conceive of reality or being. Because of the way we were brought up, we are almost wired to think of being as a substance and we think mechanistically – as if being works like parts of a machine. Modern physics, however, tells us that there is no such thing as matter. Instead, it is mass-energy. Mass and energy are interconvertible; in fact, we are primarily energy. What Teilhard said is that rather than talking about being and matter, it is more appropriate to focus on energy and the forces of attraction at the heart of the universe. When you look from the Big Bang onward, we can see a power of attraction. From the very moment something comes into being, things come together. The fundamental forces of the universe emerge early on. Despite the expansion of the universe, there is constant attraction which gives rise to more complex being. Why do we have this power of attraction? Why couldn't elements just live together without a compulsion to

come together? For Teilhard, this is what evolution is all about. It is about attraction, union, and emergence by which new things form. The power within is the power of Love, that is, God or divine Love incarnate, which is the Christ. What is emerging in evolution is not simply more complex being; it is God because God is both empowering this forward movement of mass-energy and is the goal toward which the whole is oriented.

I think what Teilhard was saying is that something has always been in the mind of God. We can say then that the incomprehensible divine source of energy who is God has always been attracting and uniting, and we call that expression of union, the Word. While Teilhard does not have a doctrine of creation, he has a doctrine of creative union. What Rahner

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would say is the self-communication of God is creation's self-transcendence. God pours God's self out and the pouring out is creation, is the Word expressed. God speaks, and the spoken word of God is what we call universe. In our Woodstock research, we are beginning to see that we cannot really separate God from creation: theos belongs to cosmos. Up until now that is how we have thought about things. We have thought about God somehow above us and with us; close to us but distinct from us. We express that separation in our language of heaven, earth, and hell – or when people say that they long to be with God or that when they die they will go to God. That kind of language of separation does not fit with what we are beginning to know about this physical universe. What we can say about God must be said in light of this evolutionary cosmos. God is "I Am," Being itself. But being is energy and energy is attractive, and this personal, attractive energy we call love. Love is always a dy-

namic relatedness, and never static. Love is always going out of itself to another and for another. Love transforms because love unites.

When we talk about God of the future, there are two things to note. One is that we are talking about a God who is already in the future because God is the source of all that is, God is the truth of reality itself. Whatever will be in the future, God is already there. God is that fountain fullness of love that far surpasses anything we could ever imagine or even grasp. At the same time, the God who is there – what Teilhard might call the Omega – is seeking to be brought to birth at the heart of the cosmos. It is love that brings God to birth because God is love. Hence, where two or more are gathered together, Jesus said, there am I in the midst of them. Union in love gives birth to God. So, whenever we come together in love, there is God. What Teilhard saw as the whole evolutionary movement is this unfolding toward greater union in love; a God who is coming to be through love at the heart of the universe. God, therefore, is in evolution, and the one who is pulling this whole evolutionary movement into its future—even in the midst of our protests and resistances.

### **Q How do you understand death?**

I see death as a release of personality and spirit into the greater whole. I think who we are is "unclonable," uniquely loved into being by God. I think from all eternity we have a unique call to participate in this unfolding movement toward the Christ, toward the wholeness of unity in love. We participate in our lifetime, but our lives are limited, finite, and fragile; hence the vessel of who we are needs to be broken for the truth and the whole truth of what we are to be for all eternity to be released into the universe. Death is the entrance into the fullness of life. Through death we enter into the whole.

We can only get a glimpse of the whole, and our participation in it is always limited by our finiteness and our limited horizons of consciousness. But I think death is transcending the finite into the infinite and eternal.

### **Q What do you believe is the role for Christians in the process of evolution?**

I have a bias toward Teilhard who saw Christianity as a religion of evolution. He wrote a series of essays along these lines, published in a book called *Christianity and Evolution*. When I look at what Teilhard constructed for Christian life in a scientific age and then when I look at where our ecclesial life is today, I think we are looking at two different directions/theologies/world views. Christianity has become fixated with history and the historical, static world view. If we look at the life of Jesus, however, we see that his life, from the beginning, was a forward-moving life – and this is what Teilhard develops. The life of Jesus is, we might say, the paradigm of what evolution is about. It's forward movement, it ushers in a new creation, it recognizes that the best of life is ahead of us, not behind us. So too, the God who is calling us into the fullness of life is ahead, not behind us. The Christian life is meant to be a forward-moving life. In the Gospels, we have Jesus saying that those who put their hand to the plow and look back are not fit for the reign of God. Looking back, however, is precisely what we have been doing for the last 20 years. Vatican II tried to move ahead but we now insist on looking back. It is time to stop looking back and to read the Gospel life with the lens of moving forward. I believe it is the only way Christianity will survive and grow in the future.

I do find a slight disconnect between the Gospels and what has emerged as Christian life. The Gospels are about reconciliation and whole-making but Christianity has become divisive and, at times, corrosive. I think Christians need to stop fighting over who is right and wrong and end the polarities and name-calling. Christianity is like a balloon into which someone has put a number of pins and flattened it. It has lost its power to transform. Teilhard saw that Christianity was losing its energy and was on a downward spiral; on the verge of becoming irrelevant. He tried to show that Christianity is an evolutionary religion, one that takes history seriously because of our incarnational claim. If this

is true then we should be evolvers of history; instead we have become a platonic, spiritual, detached type of religion. It's as if culture and history are taking place down below, but we have our heads set on some higher realm.

We need to begin to look at the Gospel in terms of evolution and then live in a new spirit of evolution. We need to ask: To what are we being attracted? What are the new unions forming in our lives? What are the greater wholes we are moving into? If we could think of Christian life in a new way, then the church would become new and be renewed in spirit. The new pluralities of culture demand new ways of uniting, new ways of community. These pluralities include ethnic and religious diversity, gender diversity, spiritual diversity. There is need to care for the earth itself, as well as the poor, the marginalized, and those excluded from the center. But Christianity was never intended to be a problem-solver. It is a religion focused on personhood, relationship, love, compassion, and unity. If these values were truly embodied, embraced, and enkindled, evolution itself would move to a new level. People are putting a lot of time and effort into areas of peace and justice but nothing new is happening because our theology and world view have not changed. Hence

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there is frustration because there is no new visible horizon emerging.

**Q In your writings you note that the church has not yet embraced evolution and therefore functions marginally in a global, complex world. What is your image of a church that does embrace the new understandings of evolution? How would that church function and be in this complex world?**

I like the idea of reimagining the church. The church is not an object to which we either belong or abstain from; rather, it is a living body and therefore has, like every living body, the capacity to change. It has the capacity to be wounded, to suffer, and to rise again. I have hope that the church can be a living presence of Christ in this unfolding universe. But at present the church has a medieval structure that hasn't changed for the past 1600 years. We need to ask what of the tradition is meaningful and what needs to become open to change, in order to respond to a world in evolution.

When I think about evolution as a process of unfolding life, my image of church becomes much broader. How can the church be a mediator of persons desiring greater unity? How can the church

be the "mother," the "nurturer" of more life, more being, and more consciousness? These are the questions I would ask rather than becoming fixed on laws and canons and rights and wrongs. This is not helpful. Fixations ultimately divide people.

I think we have to return to the person of Jesus the Christ because when we talk about Christ we are talking about personal unity in love. I think that is what the church is to be about – a living personal center of love at the heart of creation.

**Q In your work with so many people in this country and around the world, do you find resistance to the concepts of conscious evolution and, if so, what do you believe is at the root of the resistance? Is there anything you can recommend that can help people move beyond the resistance?**

There is resistance on different levels due to ignorance of evolution or fear of reducing the human person to a less than human level. When some people hear the word evolution they immediately become afraid and don't want to be related to a monkey or a whale, as if evolution equates human and non-human. We need to deepen our understanding of evolution and see it as an unfolding process of life.

There is resistance to evolution that stems from ignorance of Christianity. Many people do not know the history of Christianity and have no idea that the church has undergone many changes throughout the centuries. If we go back to the early church, we see that many of our core doctrines were fought over fiercely. They were not infallibly pronounced but prayerfully and logically thought through. Using our own terminology, it took a lot of meetings before the doctrines of trinity, incarnation and salvation were settled. The Middle Ages was a great time for the dynamism of theology. Scholasticism was methodical but also speculative. New ideas were engaged and discussed – and some of these ideas were far-reaching. Thomas Aquinas was an "avant garde" thinker, on the cutting edge of the 13th century, and not



overly appreciated by the church of his day. The Catholic intellectual tradition has always been one engaging history, politics, science, economics, and more. To evolve, the Catholic intellectual tradition needs to be invigorated and encouraged to think through the questions of faith in dialogue with the world.

I find people shrinking today – saying, “Just give me my little corner of my community or my faith or my religion, and leave me alone. Don’t bring in large ideas; it’s too much to handle.” But growth can only come about when we face our limits and the need to expand. When we think about our spiritual life, we want to grow; we don’t want to stay put. A stifled spiritual life is a dead life. When we think of our biological lives, we see that change is healthy. When we think of human consciousness, we can reflect on where we have been, what we have learned, and what we desire. So we need to get over our fear of change and accept it as part of life. The God of Jesus Christ is a God of adventure, so let go, let God, and enjoy the ride.

**Q You have stated that how we respond to the demands of this age of evolutionary change is crucial. Would you say more about this and your own hopes for the response?**

Truthfully, I think that if we do not become conscious of being in evolution, we will be on a downward spiral. Here is where I see that technology has the present reigns of evolution. Technology has a vision for humanity, to move humanity to the next phase of evolution which some see as a posthuman world. Some technocrats, like Ray Kurzweil, envision a point of synthesis between biology and machine that will transition the human species to a new level of techno sapiens. We will become so wedded with our technologies that they will be thinking for us. People are looking at the brain as a giant computer processor. We won’t have to worry about death because we will be able to download the human brain into a chip and then replant the chip into a medium. For hard-core technocrats we are really just software in hardware. Thus we will eventually have evolving mind files. It sounds “sci-fi,” but consider how quickly computer technology has come to control our daily lives. Also, the age of robotics is right around the corner. It is already in our midst in the industrial workplace and in some human areas, like eldercare. They are making robots that can respond to human emotions and to motor coordinates. So we will have robo-secretaries, robo-teachers, robo-friends. There is even a book on robotics and marriage. The most inventive is yet to come. I am not

saying that this is all good; however it is all on the horizon.

What Teilhard envisioned is that the whole evolutionary universe from the Big Bang onwards has aim and purpose. The whole thing is intended for greater personal unity, the one we call the Christ. This doesn’t mean that all people must become Catholic; rather it means that this entire creation has the capacity for the fullness of unity and love. But we can only really attain this aim of unity and love if we are conscious of being in evolution. Without it, we will be on the downward spiral of devolution, where things fragment and fall apart. I see devolution as a real possibility and counterforce to evolution. The human species could devolve but I do not think human devolution will thwart God’s ultimate plan in Christ. We can annihilate ourselves, even destroy the earth. But there is an indestructible element of life at the heart of this universe—divine Love—and because it is the heart, life will evolve anew, even from the ashes of history. So, yes, we can destroy human life and the planet, but I don’t think the evolutionary universe itself will be destroyed. Evolution will struggle to go forth in a new way.

It is important that we realize our capacity to destroy that which has been building up for billions of years. But we are also capable of evolving toward more being, more unity, more love. To me, this is the heart of the Christian life. We can destroy things and we can also help build the planet up for a new future of life. Evolution is not a blind, random process, as some scientists might say; we are not the lucky roll of carbon dice. Teilhard said that up to the emergence of the human species, natural forces were the source of evolution, but with humans, it is creativity and invention that will cause us to evolve. God is at the heart of it all. The invitation to us is to be a part of the great evolutionary venture.

**Q What would you anticipate happening if we do not embrace these new understandings of life, the universe, God? Can we influence – positively or negatively – the process of evolution?**



Chaos is good and accounts for many of the beautiful patterns of nature such as cloud formation or leaf formation. It also means that small changes can amplify and have profound effects. Out of chaos, stars are born.

It wouldn't be good. I think we have to look back over the great span of 13.7 billion years of evolution and see that there have been vast amounts of destruction -- cosmic destruction and biological destruction. Life here on earth was made possible by an asteroid hitting the planet. So there is an element of suffering that is just part and parcel of the greater fullness of life. This is not to diminish suffering but to highlight its role in the evolution of life. It may be helpful for us to revisit the costliness of Christian life -- what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called costly grace

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as opposed to cheap grace. What are we willing to spend of our lives so that Christian evolution can become a greater reality for ourselves, for the church, and world? Are we willing to step outside our comfort zones and risk new things in order for the church to evolve? It is costly -- the whole of evolution is costly. All along the way, creatures have been sacrificed for our life to come into being. If we do not have a consciousness of the costliness of life, we have no real sense of evolution, or the gospel life for that matter. We have domesticated the Gospel, made it comfortable and adaptable to our needs. The church runs sometimes like a large international corporation, not the vanguard of evolution toward new life, new creation, and a new future. I think the cross needs to be repositioned within the context of evolution. What are we willing to spend of our lives for more life to evolve?

**Q How have these new understandings informed and shaped your own spirituality?**

Anyone who knows me knows that I started out to the right of Attila the Hun. I was ultra-right wing. I had very fixed

ideas on the church, religious life, on what was orthodox and not orthodox, what was true Christianity, and what was not truly Catholic. All my biases and judgments were built on very simplistic ideas of God and church. I spent my first four years of religious life in a very traditional Carmelite cloister. While I learned there the value of prayer, I also realized that, for me, to live the Gospel life, I could not be separated from the world. By the grace of God or by the deaths that had to take place, I found myself letting go all along the way. If you asked me 20 years ago what I thought of evolution, I would have thought it was an absurd question. I was trained as a scientist and kept science and religion worlds apart. To be Catholic was, literally, to pray and obey because that is how I was taught from childhood on. My early religious life was centered on union with God in some spiritual realm. I was very platonic in my spirituality and believed that this world is corruptible and passing away.

I was a scientist to begin with--trained in the area of neuroscience--and this whole journey from Carmelite to Franciscan, from science to theology -- has brought me back to science, but as a person of faith. In a sense, I have moved from Plato to Aristotle, becoming much less Platonized in my spirituality and much more concrete/historical in my spirituality. I think I have become more incarnational. Franciscan spirituality has helped me with that. I have spent a lot of years praying about and reflecting on the life of Francis of Assisi and his own embrace of the leper and of finding God in the human person, and in rabbits, worms, and bees. Francis was an incarnational realist -- not a platonic idealist. He grasped the human person and creatures of this world as the revelation of God--the "thisness" of God. Reflecting on his life and bringing my reflection into dialogue with the new science story has caused me to shift my whole understanding of the spiritual life 180 degrees.

I am still getting my head and heart around our life with God in this universe. We still tend to think of our life with God as something "up there," wherever "there" is, something away from Earth and apart from this evolu-

tionary universe. The startling reality is that evolution and God belong together; God is the God of evolution. We have always been within God, within the cosmic whole, and we are destined to be with God for all eternity. What this means in light of our expanding universe with its multi-dimensions and infinite space-time is unknown but I think it will be much more exciting than simply "eternal rest." God is filled with imagination and creativity. So my journey has been one from a static, fixed understanding of the church and religious life to a much more dynamic, energized, and unfolding story that is still developing.

**Q How have your own personal prayer or spiritual practices evolved as your understandings of God and the universe expand?**

When I started out in religious life 28 years ago, I was very conscientious of praying the Office at set times of the day. Not to do so was a slump in spiritual life and to some extent still is. I am still committed to morning and evening prayer because prayer is that dialogue with God that energizes life and reminds us, when

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we feel like we are dying, to wake up and get ready for the journey because the best of life is before us. I think there is a rhythm that prayer gives to life. In my spiritual evolution, a prayerful living of daily life has developed hand-in-hand with a deepening consciousness of God's presence. I am not just trying to be a spiritual person pleasing to a God who is "there," but rather a person in whom God lives who recognizes that God is in me and in others. I think the Hindu practice of greeting one another -- *Namaste* (the God in me recognizes the God in you) -- is the most authentic incarnational thing anyone can say. To live in that reality makes prayer a whole new experience, and it makes life ever more prayerful. So my intent is to continuously move to a greater consciousness of prayer-ful life. □