

The Deacon's Corner

By Deacon Ron Desmarais

Space the final frontier...

I offer my apology to all the Trekkies out there. Recently I had the opportunity to attend an Ignatian Retreat at Picture Rocks. The guest speakers were Fr. Chris Corbally, SJ an astronomer with the Vatican Observatory, and Dr. Eileen O'Donoghue, astronomer and professor at St. Lawrence University. It was a wonderful weekend retreat with some great insight into the spirituality of St. Ignatius, how astronomy can be used to increase your own spirituality, as well as opportunities to not only see the stars and planets, but to be instructed by two wonderful people who shared their faith and their occupations with us.

I would like to share with you some of my impressions of the weekend. Dr. O'Donoghue did three presentations: *The Gift of Darkness*, *Substance of Self*, and *Beneath the Surface*. Fr. Corbally did the *Spiritual Reflections of St. Ignatius*. Without going into all the math and science I would like to share with you some of the things I was able to take away.

"In the beginning when God created the heavens and the Earth, the Earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep" Genesis 1:1 The Inclusive Bible

When God said, "Let there be light." A great explosion took place in the void. There the light traveled out in all directions with nothing to stop it. After 500,000 years atoms from the Big Bang: Hydrogen (75%) and Helium (25%) began to absorb some of the light, most light traveled freely without interacting with any matter. Slowly the universe became transparent; darkness fell for the first time. Space began to cool, atoms interacted with each other, becoming denser and denser until they ignited and a star was born.

Scripture tells us in *Genesis*: *"Evening Came ... 'As the universe expanded and cooled, darkness descended, '...And Morning Followed...' Then light dawned anew with the formation of the first stars. Each star is a nuclear furnace where matter is coaxed into releasing a little of the*

energy it inherited from the primordial fireball."
Timothy Ferris: *The Creation of the Universe*

The carbon we are made of was forged in ancient stars and will be blown back into the cosmos by the sun's death as a planetary nebula. We are made from the ash of these stars. So on Ash Wednesday we should tell ourselves, "Remember that you are stars and to the stars you will return." Kind of places a whole different meaning when placed into this context doesn't it?

"In our own sun there are 700 oxygen atoms, 400 carbon atoms and 2 calcium atoms for every million atoms of hydrogen; ...these heavier atoms were created in stars that preceded our sun, stars that illuminated the younger galaxy with a brilliant blue light."

"One hundred septillion (10^{26}) hydrogen nuclei were processed in the interiors of Vega-like stars to create the pebble in my hand." - Chet Raymo, *Honey from Stone*.

Think about that for a minute. Not the incredibly large number, but a pebble in your hand. Go outside, pick up a small pebble and look at it. There are many sides to the pebble. It can be round or have sharp edges. It can be concave or convex, it can be scarred from other rocks or smooth from tumbling in a stream. A pebble is like us: many faceted, injured by our own sins or by abuse from others, we can be marred by life's travails or shaped by our choices. Each one of us is a creature created by God in His image, but allowed to be remolded by the choices we make. Just as he created energy and matter he created us. Space is still growing and changing and so are we. The awesomeness of the universe as great as it is is not as great as each one of us; because he has made us with a purpose. It is our "choice", our "free will" that will keep us from fulfilling the purpose he desires for us.

"...then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the

breath of life, and the man became a living being...." Genesis 2:7 The Inclusive Bible.

"It is in so many ways fruitful. All creation comes from it. Yet it forms not only the basic raw material for humankind, but also the substance of the incarnation of God's son." Hildegard of Bingen

The substance of the incarnation of God's son.

Wow! Think about that. God created the stars, galaxies, and the planets, matter, energy, and the "ashes of stars" so that we could be formed from them and be saved by His own Son who was made from the same substance of the stars as us. So when we recite the Creed and say, "and he became man", it is not just flesh and blood that we are talking about, but the very elements of creation that God made with the simple phrase: "let there be light."

Feel and rejoice in your physical substance the actual atoms forged in stars, incorporated into planet Earth. A cosmic wind moving through you, rocks, plants, and all other beings, a wind created 13 billion years ago so that you could exist. Can you see how awesome God is? The stars, the planets, the galaxies all are out there so that YOU could be created from the matter and energy of their creation.

Think about this. **Wave-Particle Duality:** Matter is a wave AND a particle! It exists as both natures...until it interacts with matter. Then it manifests one nature appropriate to the interaction.

How can it be BOTH at ONCE? We don't know ... but it is!

How can Jesus be True God and True Man? We don't know but He is!

God cannot be contrary to His own nature, and neither can Nature. If matter can have two natures, so can God, Son, and Holy Spirit. God manifests one nature appropriate to the interaction. It is through His interaction with us that He manifests both of His natures.

"Whatever is going on in God is a flow that's like a dance and God is not a dancer, God is the dance, itself." - Richard Rohr, *The Divine Dance: Exploring the Mystery of the Trinity.*

In the lyrics to the song "Lord of the Dance", by Sidney Carter he tells us about the Lord of the Dance.

I danced in the morning when the world was young
I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun.
I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth.
At Bethlehem I had my birth.

Refrain: "Dance, dance, wherever you may be
I am the Lord of the Dance", said He.
"And I lead you all, wherever you may be,
and I lead you all in the dance", said He.

I danced for the scribes and the Pharisees,
they wouldn't dance, they wouldn't follow me.
I danced for the fishermen; James and John
they came with me so the dance went on.

Refrain

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame.
The holy people said, "It was a shame."
They ripped, they stripped, they hung me high;
Left me there on the cross to die.

Refrain

I danced on a Friday when the world turned black.
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back.
They buried my body, they thought I was gone,
but I am the dance, and the dance goes on.

Refrain

They cut me down and I leapt up high.
I am the life that will never, never die.
I'll live in you if you'll live in me"
"I am the Lord of the dance", said He.

Refrain

If God is the Lord of the Dance then we all need to join with him, to clap, to sing, and to move to the music of the cosmos. David danced before the Ark of the Covenant, preceding it into Jerusalem. We need to dance before the Ark of the Covenant to enter into the fullness of faith.