

**A Binding Back to Origin**      by Gail Worcelo, sgm  
(Published by Sophia Center/Holy Names University)

Religion comes from the Latin, Re-ligare meaning *to bind back*. This is our mission at Green Mountain Monastery, '*A Binding Back to Origin*'. We are a new 21<sup>st</sup> century monastery in Greensboro, Vermont whose founding inspiration gathers its momentum from the prophetic message and guidance of our mentor Thomas Berry, cp.

What we "*bind back*" here is a deep understanding of ourselves within the comprehensive context of a 13.7 billion year unfolding universe. This binding back situates us within the great community of existence.

Metaphorically, it is as if we have entered into the dark space of the cosmic confessional and have been given a new perspective. One which absolves us of old notions of ourselves as separate from the entire cosmic and planetary process through which we have come and of which we are a part.

We are absolved from the great illusion of disconnection which seeks to advance human well being by plundering the planet in its geological and biological structure and functioning.

In our Rule of Life we say,

*In this particular historical period we come into existence as a new monastery at a time when the total range of life systems of the planet are endangered. The geological, biological and chemical balance of Earth, so necessary for life and the very basis of our continuity as a species is undergoing irreversible damage and disruption.*

*This loss is bringing with it a corresponding loss of soul. In destroying Earth, the Matrix of Mystery and locus for encountering God, we are bringing harm both to our outer world and inner spirits. We understand that a spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> century will not flourish on a planet where the primary evidences of the Divine are distorted or lost.*

*In response to the magnitude of this crisis and the consequences for every being on the planet we are convinced that this assault on the natural world is contrary to the deep wisdom of our religious tradition and the evolutionary ethics inherent in the universe process itself.*

The priestly role of the scientific community in our time has been to provide us with the deepest context for religion by giving us the story of the universe. We have extended our senses in every direction from quantum to deep space and have discovered a universe not so much as

**static cosmos but as unfolding cosmogenesis, a universe in communion with itself at every level, in all places and through vast sweeps of time.**

**Our mentor, Thomas Berry has given us some fundamental principles of the universe which we reflect upon like mantras. These principles point to the fact that the universe is already and completely bound back with and to itself. Here are three:**

- The universe is a unity. Because of this unity all things are bound together as an interacting and genetically related community of beings.**
- The universe is a communion of subjects not a collection of objects.**
- The universe is a seamless unfolding or Epoch of one time irreversible events moving from lesser to greater complexity.**

**This new Epoch of Evolution has begun to penetrate our consciousness in challenging ways while breaking open the ancient questions- Who are we? And Why are we here?**

**We understand that our responsibility to Earth is not simply to preserve it, but to be present to it in its next sequence of transformations. While we were unknowingly carried through the evolutionary process in former centuries, the time has come when we must guide and energize the process ourselves.**

**As a new monastery for the 21<sup>st</sup> century we understand that our new role within this vast, unfolding cosmic drama is to partner with the Divine in guiding the process forward. This means that at this point in the story of the universe WE, through our choices and decisions, are the ones determining how life for the entire planetary community will unfold into the future.**

**To this end, we extend comprehensive care and compassion toward the great fecundity of life that the planet has brought forth and concern ourselves with two particular issues which we believe pose the greatest threat to the future of life on the planet:**

**Loss of Diversity and Destruction of the Commons.**

**St Thomas Aquinas wrote, “Diversity is the perfection of the universe.” The universe as a whole speaks of the inexhaustible fecundity of the Divine at the root of reality. There has never been a time when the universe did not seek to further its diversity. From galaxies to stars, to plants, animals and humans, to cultures, languages, ritual and art, variety and difference are pervasive.**

**We experience in our time a shrinking of diversity and are aware of the shattering consequences of this “reduction to one dimensionality” on**

**many levels of life. A primary effect of this reduction is an extreme loss of soul in the human community and depletion of our religious imagination.**

**We esteem diversity as a necessary condition for a liveable universe and as the source of earth's highest perfection. We are committed to upholding and protecting diversity in all of its forms.**

**In the Acts of the Apostles we read, "And they shared all things in common."**

**In our time sharing all things in common takes on profound meaning.**

**What are the commons? The Earth. The Earth is made as a commons. Here on this planet we define the "Commons" as the sum of all we have inherited and must pass on undiminished to future generations. This includes our water, air, soil, forests, sky, oceans and seeds.**

**Since the "Commons" are our shared legacy they need to be managed for long term common benefit and the protection. As a monastery with an awareness that the sacred gifts of creation belong to everyone, we understand that protecting the commons must be an organizing principle for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and give ourselves in service to this effort.**

**Inherent in the large scale dynamics of the universe are evolutionary ethics which are guiding principles laid into the very foundation of the universe itself. It is here that we need to explore the meaning of "religion" or "binding back" because there is no larger or more profound context in which to seek guidance.**