

### **INTERNATIONAL INITIAL FORMATION TEAM**

The international initial formation team met in Rome from 1 – 15 April 2016 as planned by them at their last meeting in June 2015. The purpose of this meeting was to “To deepen the understanding of religious life in the light of the new universe story”, and to plan for the session for accompaniers to be held in January 2018.

### **GOAL OF THE TEAM**

**In the ongoing process of growth of our Holy Family Contemplative/Apostolic members, we enable them to be open to the unfolding love of God in the Universe and be joyful, faith-filled, self-giving women with passion for and commitment to Jesus’ mission of ‘Oneness.’**

### **Team members**

**Pauline Manzueto** from Congo, responsible for French speaking Africa

**Breda Grehan**, an Irish missionary in South Africa, responsible for English speaking Africa

**Adela Fernandez**, from Argentina, responsible for the Network of Latin America

**Ewa Rozycka**, from Poland, responsible for Poland

**Sanjeevanie Hendalage**, from Sri Lanka (Colombo Unit), responsible for Asia

**Malinie Joseph**, from the Contemplative sisters, responsible for the Vicariate

**Adela Vanaclocha**, from Martillac Community, link person with Ongoing formation

**Shanthi Simon** – the Co-coordinator of the Team, from Sri Lanka (Jaffna Unit), responsible for Asia

**Geni Dos Santo** – link Councillor from GLT

**Kumudinie Dassanayake** – link Councillor from GLT

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01/04/2016

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The meeting began with a few words of warm welcome to all the team members by Shanthi SIMON, the coordinator of the team. In place of Jesmin who became the leader of the Colombo Unit, Sanjeevani HENDALAGE was welcomed as a new member to the team. The 8 members along with the two link councillors sat in a circle. A beautiful symbol of "Indra's net" arranged at the centre with coloured ribbons and gems expressed the connectedness of the team members, one to another and to all in the journey of formation. The news of another new member to the team, was announced – Sriya Pushpam ANTONY from India - but, she was unable to take part in this meeting due to unavoidable circumstances.

## INDRA'S NET

Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net, which has been hung by some cunning magician in such a manner that it, stretches out indefinitely in all directions. In accordance with the excessive tastes of deities, the magician has hung a single glittering jewel at the net's every node, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number. There hang the jewels, glittering like stars of the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we at random, select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that the process of reflection is infinite.

(The avatamsaka sutra)



### **Indra's Net speaks of the Interconnectedness of All things**

When any jewel in the net is touched, all other jewels in the node are affected. This speaks to the hidden interconnectedness and interdependency of everything and everyone in the universe.

Indra's Net is a challenge to the assumption of a solid and fixed universe 'out there'.

The opening prayer was based on 'the journey to Emmaus' and sharing their reflection, each member expressed the need to take the risk in walking and journeying with the other. There are always moments of doubt, darkness like in the case of the two disciples but at the end, they lead to the resurrection light and hope. In powerlessness God calls to live in the 'Now'; there are moments of difficulties but there are also moments of joy and life.

Thereafter, a brief sharing took place on how the transmission of the Action Plan was carried out in their own Unit. This helped the members to be connected to the situation of each Unit.

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02/04/2016

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The second day began with a prayer, inviting all to celebrate the unity of all life, experiencing the joy of Christ's resurrection.

**One life runs through everything, all are creatures of one life. We live carefully and consciously, bless all creatures and elements of this Earth, we share this Earth we bless the unity of all life.**

The whole day was spent giving enough time to each member to share how the Action Plan drawn in 2015 was lived in her particular context. At the end of the day the following important aspects were gathered from that sharing:

- ❑ All are in a process of formation – the close link between initial and ongoing formation.
- ❑ Importance of the quality of accompaniment, especially during the time of “contact”.
- ❑ Searching new ways into the future:
  - New way of being missionary
  - International, intercultural experience
  - Novitiates to be organized at language level
  - Initial formation to be different but more connected
- ❑ Communities: faith based; Relational; Formative

❏ Effects of social media on religious life

- ❏ How to bring the understanding of the New Story of the Universe into day-to-day reality in the formation process?
- The importance of silence, solitude and contemplation

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03/04/2016

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The team took this day for personal reflection; sharing in language groups and then bringing to the big group the insights and suggestions in view of planning their next session for the Accompaniers, to be held in January 2018.



From April 4 – 14, the team entered into a deeper understanding of religious life in the light of the New Story of the Universe. This session was facilitated by Margaret Muldoon and Colleen Moore.

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04/04/2016

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The Opening Prayer was connecting with the Feast of the Annunciation and the Resurrection.

The mystery of ‘God among us’ incarnated or made flesh in the person of Jesus and the wonder of Resurrection as fullness of life in Christ, is one mystery – of God’s love in all that is. The Creative Spirit “birthed Jesus in the womb of Mary, enabled her to live her whole life in response to God’s action. The same Spirit keeps each of us in being and brings us together, doing a new thing in us as we respond in openness to the wonder of it all, as Mary did. This Creative Spirit continues to make all things new.”

## The members were awakened to being:

- Women of faith
- Women who belong to the Family of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles with a responsibility for formation
- Women on a contemplative, reflective journey into greater Christ consciousness, into Love – made not alone but together.

## Purposes for the Session

- ✿ To grow in awareness that living our mission is meaningful only to the extent of relating it to the context within the cosmology and its worldview.
- ✿ To explore together new ways of participating in God's Love in the world, in the light of ongoing revelation and evolution of our Big cosmic story.

## Evolution of our understanding of the Universe

“A **cosmology** is how human persons experience themselves in relation to the cosmos. It is the lens through which reality is viewed and interpreted.”

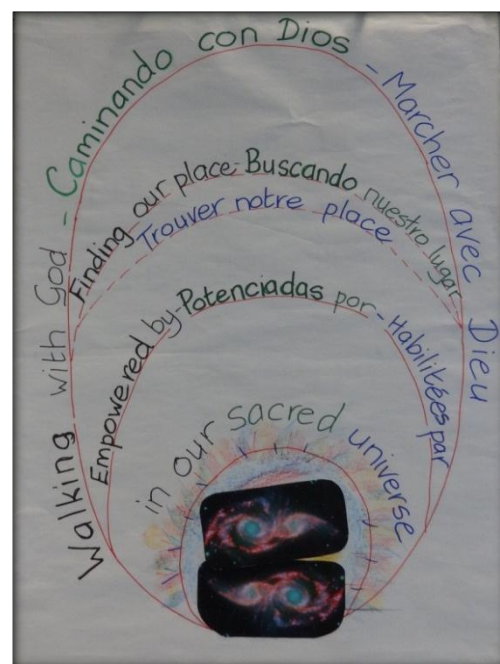
“A **cosmology** tells you how things are in reality, what really matters and provides the foundation for core values, belief systems and moral norms. “

“A **cosmology** gives a community meaning and purpose.”

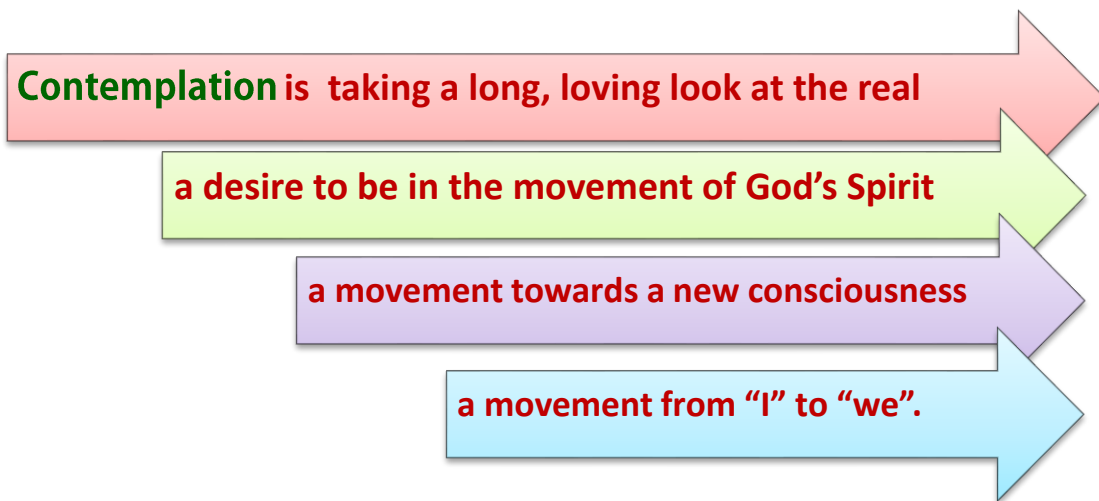
The different cosmologies that had developed through the ages – Ancient Egypt Cosmos; Ancient Hebrew Cosmos; Middle Ages and Newtonian Cosmos.

“In the Old cosmology, humans imagined themselves as separate from and above the rest of nature. They believed that they lived ON Earth.

The New cosmology enables us to think of God not only as transcendent but also intimately revealed in and through this divinely creative cosmos. Humans are recognized as an integral part of Earth not superior to it.”



The New Story of the Universe is a transformative story and an awakening to a contemplative way of being, is integral to this New Story. There, life-giving vision emerges.



Thomas Merton says – “Contemplation is the fundamental reality of life, it makes life real and alive. It makes us truly human. Contemplation goes beyond concepts and apprehends God not as a separate object but as the Reality within our reality, the Being within our being, the Life of our life.”

A Power Point presentation on “A New Story of the Universe” made the participants to experience a deep sense of wonder and gratitude.

**Woman, when will you soar on the wings of your longing?  
to the blissful heights, where I await your love...  
I will touch you with my presence divine...**



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**05/04/2016**

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The Morning Prayer based on a true story, helped all to enter into an experience of oneness. It was about Opal Whiteley, a young mystic who experienced wholeness, God, while picking wood sticks for her mama. She looked long and deep at them and felt the feelings of the wood and knew that the tree was inside her; that she and the tree were one.

Karl Rahner said, "You will either be a mystic, one who has experienced God as real, an intimate, passionate, personal presence or you will be nothing."

## A reflection on the Dream of God

“In the beginning was silence. In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was Love, Holy Wisdom, One, the Christ.....In one tremendous act of Love the Word flung open and the Dream began. With this great act of Love the story became our story too.

The Word did not lose itself in this act of radical openness... In a split cosmic second the energy of the great burst of light had begun to take form. Every proton that ever was, is or will be was formed in that moment. Every proton and every cell in our body was formed in that moment... Each remained connected to the Dreamer of the dream and was reflecting the Holy One. Every creature is a word of God, a unique, unrepeatable manifestation of the Holy.

One species developed a unique form of consciousness – the capacity to reflect upon and celebrate the mystery, the joy, the awe of the holy Dream; able to know that all of life is holy, that all creation is a unique incarnation and expression of the dream. Yet often humankind forgets, fails to remember that ALL IS ONE; that all of life is connected.... And when we forget the connectedness, the oneness, the unity, we forget who we really are and all of life is diminished.

We pray then to remember the Dream, to remember that in each face we encounter, the Holy One is there, waiting for us to recognize the God within all.....”

The participants were given an hour of contemplation in and with nature:

### A few lines from their rich experiences:

- ✓ Sense of Sacredness
- ✓ Deep sense of gratitude
- ✓ Joy of being connected to every being
- ✓ Each tiny being has its own giftedness
- ✓ Inner stillness
- ✓ Magnificent energies of each creation
- ✓ Simplicity, loving bearing of Grass



In the evening, the participants enjoyed a time of free self-expression through painting



Attentively entering the sacred space



Choosing colours of preference



Creativity in colour, expressing dreams

**From April 7 afternoon – 9<sup>th</sup> evening**, the members of the team entered into a time of deep reflection, conversation, sharing on the New Universe Story. They also saw how to apply it to Holy Family way of formation.

## What is new?

- ✿ Planetary persons
- ✿ Unbroken wholeness
- ✿ Evolution is human story and not background
- ✿ Compassionate embrace
- ✿ Evolution as a movement towards “More” fullness, life, newness
- ✿ Matter is not building blocks – but a web of relationships
- ✿ Reality is marked by relationships
- ✿ Christ consciousness calls to be whole-makers



## Newness emerging in Religious life

Common novitiates – missionary life – experience of inter-congregational communities

- Movement in prayer from old to new
- We are at a fruitful time in history – we search and try to change our mind-set to listen to the young
- All the efforts to put into practice the Charism – efforts for formation in a new way – in the light of the New Story
- Communication and openness to different cultures - desire to go beyond race, culture, country – having a global mentality
- Openness to understand religious life in a new way – search together new possibilities – go beyond – open to dialogue; More emphasis on co-operation, collaboration

### Some highlights from Illia Delio's reflections

Ilia Delio, OSF is a Franciscan Sister of Washington, DC and an American theologian specializing in the area of science and religion, with interests in evolution, physics and neuroscience and the significance of these for theology. Ilia, a woman, a religious, a theologian and a scientist, engages herself in her writings, making connections with the New Universe Story and Christian faith.



### LIVING IN A CHRISTIFIED UNIVERSE

- ➡ We are invited to understand the Universe as one unbroken whole. The Universe, as our sacred story, has a Christ dimension from the very beginning.... Everything is related to Christ. Everything in the Universe is sacred because it holds something of the Word of God, Christ, in a unique way. Thomas Merton says that to enter into this understanding of Christ, a life of prayer and contemplation is essential!
- ➡ Christ consciousness invites us to change our ways, to sense our connection with all of life, to live in awareness, appreciation and gratitude for all that is, to live in harmony with Earth and so become a source of healing love for the sake of the whole community of life.... Becoming a “planetary person...”

- The call of Christ is to become as Jesus was – a whole maker, one who participates in a vision that ALL is ONE.

### **LOVE IN A DYNAMIC UNIVERSE**

- In the story of human species we see that everything that exists keeps being drawn to each other by the power of **allurement, attraction, gravity**, as Teilhard call it – **LOVE energy**. Love is all that God is. Trinity – dance of love - all God can do is pour out love and draw all into Love.
- The attraction between everything is God, the attraction we have for one another is God, the attraction we have for creation is God.
- We participate in the relational Love we call Trinity – the Dance of Love – and it happens everywhere, moving the rich diversity of Creation in unity and love.
- Love unites, draws one to the other and in that bond something new emerges.

### **LIFE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS**

- The death of Jesus is significant because his “yes” to the intimate love of God was a result of a life lived in fidelity to the demands of love. Jesus’ suffering and death was the final expression of his life lived for others.
- Death is not due to sin and evil; is not the opposite of life **BUT** is integral to life. Without death there can be no life.
- Only an almighty can give itself wholly to the other and be a helpless love
- To refuse death – even the “little deaths” – is to die. To be willing to die by surrendering to the freedom of the Spirit is to live forever.
- To live eternal life is to live in the NOW unconditionally and wholeheartedly, to lose ourselves for the sake of love.

April 9<sup>th</sup> was spent in looking back over the week focusing on “Walking with God and finding our place in our sacred universe”. The participants were given enough time for personal reflection, sharing in language groups and then in the big group. Many important points came up in relation to each one’s personal journey, initial formation journey and the link between initial and ongoing formation journey. They will prioritize this at the end of the meeting.



**Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> - Break:** All refreshed themselves in their own way – some went out and others relaxed and rested at home.



Malinie Joseph & Ewa Rozycka, at Civitavecchia sea in Rome

**April 11<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> was the final phase, with the theme – “Empowered by our sacred universe”.**


*A brief but moving film (**The Turtle World**) brought to awareness that Earth is a living being. There was an invitation to understand, that everything is holy, everything is created in and with and through God.*

At the beginning, The Turtle – symbol of Earth - is self-sustaining; at the end The Turtle swims away disappearing into ocean depths ...



The story highlighted that all species on Earth would thrive without the humans and humans depend on all species for their survival. It is not about stewardship but about solidarity and sustainability. “Sustainability is the ability of the current generation to meet its needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.” (United Nations 1987).

The TEN Powers of the Universe were explained with time for reflection on how to apply them to personal life, religious life and HF formation.

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- 1. The power of centration: thinking from the whole**
  - 2. Allurement: (attraction)**
  - 3. Emergence: the power of creativity, bringing the new to birth**
  - 4. Homeostasis: stability/balance**

5. **Cataclysm: the power of breaking down in the Universe**
6. **Synergy: the power of relationship**
7. **Transmutation: the power of change within an individual**
8. **Transformation: the power of the individual to change the whole**
9. **Interrelatedness - the power of care**
10. **The power of radiance: the way Universe communicates beauty, magnificence**

On the last day, under the theme - **“Ecology and Eucharist”** - the team members had a reflection based on the work of Denis Edwards where he explains Eucharist as a communion-event.

- ✿ “The gifts of creation are lifted up to God and the Spirit is invoked to transform the gifts of creation, and the assembled community, into the Body of Christ.”
- ✿ “When Christians gather for Eucharist, they bring the Earth and all its creatures, and in some way the whole universe, to the table. This is seen through five steps:
  - Eucharist as the lifting up of all creation
  - as the living memory of both creation and redemption
  - as sacrament of the Cosmic Christ
  - as the Spirit creating an event of communion
  - as solidarity with the victims.”



The rest of the day was spent in integration and evaluation of the whole 9 days.

At the end of the day – they expressed feelings of deep gratitude to Margaret and Colleen and to one another. This session came to a close as they danced together in joy!

The last day was spent in integration and evaluation of the whole session, guided by the following points:

- **After being together for 9 days, what is being born in you?**
- **How will you nurture this new life?**
- **How will this new life enrich your contribution locally and internationally in formation?**

### **Some emerging points from the rich sharing that followed:**

- ▶ Conscious awareness to become LOVE – full of Light to shine
- ▶ Deeply called to marvel, ponder, to take a long, loving look at the real
- ▶ Growing awareness to live in awe, wonder of God’s unfolding Love
- ▶ We cannot hold on to both old and new at the same time
- ▶ Deepened sense and owning of “walking with God and finding our place in the sacred universe”- with openness to see capacity for re-birthing
- ▶ Awareness of Earth as alive – and all as planetary beings
- ▶ Create open systems in/around
- ▶ Feel committed to give time to relive, reflect on and share this experience
- ▶ Open and willing to die to all that kills oneness
- ▶ Commit to give space for silence, create contemplative space
- ▶ Be flexible with the young, have confidence in them
- ▶ In community, in relationships – develop listening, dialogue and deep conversation – courage to say ‘yes’ to truth
- ▶ Commit wholeheartedly to the journey, trusting that a positive change is happening – dropping the old and rising to the new being born
- ▶ Keep oneself available to journey with all groups in Units
- ▶ Allow Energy to flow in community, transmit and integrate this in formation – encouraging new members to develop creativity
- ▶ Growing in awareness and experience of being Team – with the differences, interconnected – discovering common desires

Ana Maria who was present with the team at the beginning of this session joined them at the end when the team concluded this deep and rich experience in prayer, song and dance.

**“The Movement towards Wholeness - Our task is to free ourselves from the illusion of separation and widen the Circle of Compassion...” - Albert Einstein.**

The following day the team met again to finalize what is to be carried forward from this session into the formation process and decided upon the 3 following aspects.

### Deeper reflection on the evolving Universe Story:

- To see ourselves as Holy Family and the relevance of our Charism within the Universe Story (reading personal, Holy Family Story within this)
- Openness to a developing theology in the light of the new cosmology
- Open to the unfolding images of God as Love Energy / a new reflection of God
- Continue deepening Vowed Life for Mission in and through community

### Developing a contemplative approach to life:

- Conscious awareness of Earth – we are a part of the Whole
- Taking and providing space for a long, loving look at Reality
- Attentive listening to the cries of Earth and poor and seeking together discerned responses with a sensitivity to live in “a state of exodus”

### Formation rooted in life:

- Enable the new members to know the Holy Family way of life – allowing their desires and gifts to emerge for Mission
- Grow in awareness that ALL are in a process of formation and allow life to form us.
- Deepen the document on “Formation for Mission” (Martillac 2012)

