

THAT ALL MAY BE ONE

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The theme of our Assembly is our charism. And this is a great opportunity to deepen together about some of the implications of this kind of invitation and calling for today's world.

I would like, briefly, to offer a general brushstroke of where we are in terms of a global comprehension of the world in which we live and minister as sisters around the globe.

As some theologians say, today's religious landscape is shifting. It is common to hear, in the Western World, the concept and very poignant difference between spirituality and religion. Many people say to be "spiritual but not religious". In fact in Europe in general churches are almost empty.

Where this perception of spirituality versus religion comes from? What has happened in our different religions?

The 20th century philosopher Karl Jaspers coined the notion of the "Axial Age".

We are initiating the second Axial Age. The first fell between 800 and 200 BC. Until this shift, before the first Axial Age, human spirituality had been largely Earth based. The gods were found in the seasons. Fertility rites and the divine feminine were celebrated...and identity was collective. The sacredness of the Earth was at the center.

But, Axial spirituality began breaking ties with the collective identity and with the Earth. The human and the individuality were at the center of everything... and we can see the consequences in the global situation we suffer today. We are killing life following mentalities supported by the religions.

Most of us have been raised and educated under this paradigm. Probably Africa and the Indigenous people have something to teach us in this regard.

On the other hand, the 2nd Axial Era is here. Its main component is interconnection of all of life. And in doing this we recover what we had lost

of the profound earthiness and connection with and among every created being, along with recovering a deep sense of collective identity.

And we are present to all of this without losing our appreciation of the individual, the transcendent and the rational of the last centuries.

Thinkers say it is probably in the New Testament where we can find light and answers.

Is SFCC one of the answers?

A few days ago a friend invited both of us to participate soon at a webinar with one of the most top philosophical-religious feminist movements in Spanish language, based in México, called: “Tras las huellas de Sophia”: “Following Sophia footsteps”. Our friend’s indication was: we need to hear about SFCC, she says: it is the community of the present opening the way to the future. She tells her colleagues, SFCC is here, let’s stop wandering and discussing about today’s possible communities, and let’s listen to them.

They also want to hear about our interpretation of SFCC in Spanish language including different cultures: the Community of Magdala.

Yes, we do have something to say, and everything starts in our spirituality, in our roots.

How are we, as individuals and therefore as a Community making the shift from the shaky religiosity based on the first Axial Era to the second?

How are we envisioning our collectiveness, our awareness of Being One, and at the same time extremely different?

“The greater the diversity, the greater the perfection” says Berry.

How can we better comprehend the unity that speaks to our hearts from our charism, in the midst of such enormous diversity we experience in our community?

Theilhard de Chardin offers a concept: Omega which does not mean a final goal rather it is a way, a process, to deepen towards a more unified future. Omega is the revelation of God as the central dynamism at the heart of everything.

And I would like to say that our charism, **that all may be one**, has the dynamism, the inner force that allows and impels our evolution into a collective of women of the present, opening ways for the future.

Last weekend we both offered a retreat to the Permanent Deacons of the Diocese, with their wives. They ended saying they want more. They want to hear more about the implementation of the model that SFCC offers For the Christian communities of the present into the future.

The question that arises within me being myself convinced of our model is: having the tools, are we, am I, prophetically living out the indications of the Second Axial Era in which we live? We in the Western World come from a very individualistic and materialistic cultures, and the shift towards a Collective lifestyle and Earth oriented live is a real challenge.

I was deeply touched when, preparing for this sharing with you all, in my reflection time the passage of the Bleeding woman from the Gospel of Mark came to me. It is a passage that lately I avoid because it is overused to affirm women's role and ministry, and could become overheard too.

But this word came to me when praying for light and inspiration for this reflection. So, I listened, I prayed, I welcomed its energy and its empowerment.

Let's listen with our hearts:

Gospel: Mark 5, 25-29

A woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."

Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

What do I need to touch to heal my bleeding, my lack of sincere appreciation and support of our diversity? **What do we need to touch** to become whole, to accept oneness in the midst of a great diversity?

LEARNING FROM NATURE

Just read a few days ago from a Spanish biologist working with trees and forests this impressive example that for her became a turning point in terms of being awoken to another stage of consciousness. She saw in the forest while working:

An old felled trunk, broken and separated from everything that continued to bear leaves. She noticed how the rest of the trees in the environment helped it to stay alive: they fed it; they protected it by collaborating with each other to keep it alive.

Why does one tree species help another tree species?

It is like a social system, the trees know that only in community they can achieve their survival. Nature is cooperative.

Trees have existed for 300 million years and humans only 30 million years ago. We can learn something.

They do not need us. We do need them. They might be one of the big solutions to fight the global warming. They may teach us about Oneness in the midst of diversity.

What I refer to by these is about the interdependent dynamic energy that runs thru every aspect of life. The way the universe orders its creative energy everywhere and in everything.

From almost 14 billion years ago to this moment and onwards...each of us is different and unique. (This is the first of the 3 cosmological principles of differentiation or diversity).

Since the beginning of time, of the explosion of energy we experience the principle of differentiation as the energy that promotes evolution, process, and it all occur in a great variety of billions and billions of beings. Without diversity, without differentiation we wouldn't have life.

Berry says that the cosmic principle of differentiation offers a wonderful invitation to surrender to the overwhelming expression of diversity. It invites us to make room for the other, to be vulnerable before the limitations of myself and of the other. The invitation of Jesus of the Gospels was always into openness, to expand my image of neighbor.

What do we need to touch, as the bleeding woman did to nourish a source of spirituality that fits today?

Perhaps we need to visit our spirituality that goes far beyond our religiosity and connecting with our roots, like the trees, create a strong and profound system of communication with ourselves, with God and with the community.

Could it be one of the aspects of our vow of simplicity (poverty) to accept that it is in the silence of nature, in our breathing in and out that we, like the trees, create community?

Could this be done in a way that we respect the mystery of diversity as sacred Earth, as a burning bush, and we hear the invitation to take off our sandals because this is God's Earth?

Perhaps we are invited to remain in silence contemplating the Spirit at work among ourselves, knowing that when breathing in and out we breathe each other's breath of life and in so doing we are touching each other's life.

What do I need to touch to heal, to stop bleeding, so that the community heals and grows in this new second Axial Era so filled with promises and challenges.

Moment of silence to hear what is touching me, here and now.

Thank you sisters

Part II Carmen Notario

From unity-diversity we move to the next law of the Universe which is

Subjectivity: is an effort at naming the ability of each being to become itself. It is about the interior dimension of things... the inner principle of being.

Interiority has everything to do with “**listening to**”: We are so lucky not to have to be subjected to structures, to rules, to visions imposed from other people or institutions...we are pretty free because most of us have decided to abandon religious communities who acted like business companies, which looked more for the good of the company than for the individuals. The purpose of all this, is only to become our true self, and to help others in the same task.

When we hear this we think of the way in which we, SFCC members understand obedience. We listen to the Word of God, we listen to the signs of the times around us; we listen to the needs and to the talents that have been given to us as a present to share with others, and we also listen to the members of our respective regions who help see what we might not see in ourselves.

Many of you have lived this ideal for over 50 years...may be not so many. Many of us are relatively new to this call to true freedom, that rather than allowing us to do **our thing**, calls us to a deep responsibility, not only within our own community, but a global responsibility that has concrete consequences now and for all times.

“Create community” wherever you are, is our calling as Sisters For Christian Community, create bonds and threads that unite us going beyond believes and races and ideas. And besides the challenge of going beyond creeds and countries and ideologies today we have a “work” to do as Thomas Berry puts it:

“Our fulfillment is not in our isolated human grandeur, but in our intimacy with the larger earth community, for this is also the larger dimension of our being.

The New Story, which is in reality the “Old Story” because it takes us to the beginnings, to the way in which everything came into being, corresponds to the new axial time in which we find ourselves immersed but, we are having a hard time in accepting it. It is not easy to pass from one Era to the next one. Especially we, who were born in the twentieth century, have been witnesses to progress that had not been seen in the whole history of the earth at such a rapid pace.

At this point we question ourselves if all that progress has helped us to be better human beings.

Magda and I had an immersion in this concept of a larger earth community when we were able to experience some years ago, in Ireland, during ten weeks a new understanding of the “Story” that sustains us. It was like entering into the sea for a swim and experiencing the strength of a wave that turns you upside down; for a moment you don’t know where you are and the strength of the sea keeps on turning you all of a sudden you are returned to the shore and you need time to put things in its place.

It really provoked a change in our lives and we need time for this; in order to be converted to a new vision we need time.

I would like to mention to you only one course: **“The course of spirituality of Creation”**. We waited during the whole week to hear about spirituality, instead, this geologist (a former brother), talked to us about rocks, the origin of the universe that gave birth to the possibility of all forms of life to finally reach to us. Those who arrived the latest in the evolution of creation (human beings), think that are the most important of all and also we grant ourselves the power to manipulate the resources of the earth for our own benefit. He told us: If you don’t speak to the new generations on these terms they will not understand you; your language is too religious and you need to move to the realm of spirituality.

OUR PROPHETIC CALLING:

Part of our religious calling is both to announce as well as to denounce. We, as a body of men and women religious have done it well for centuries, denouncing social injustices, as well as bringing education, food and covering the basic needs to the poorest people; we still need to do it in so many areas of the world.

The new story, the new vision of our interconnectedness impels us to work at deep levels of collaboration taking every living creature into account. There is a purpose for every living thing that affects the whole of creation. As we learn more and more about the different habitats and how the health of a habitat affects the rest of the habitats of the world our individualistic approach appears as a complete failure.

Now, we are called to be awake and to awaken, first with our lifestyle but also with our words and actions. There are so many issues that concern and sometimes overwhelm us:

[“We are talking only to ourselves. We are not talking to the rivers, we are not listening to the wind and stars. We have broken the great conversation. By breaking that conversation we have shattered the universe. All the disasters that](#)

[are happening now are a consequence of that spiritual 'autism.'](#)” Says Thomas Berry.

Because the elements in nature talk to us about life, life in the Spirit, they guide us to the depth of our life; they teach how to live in harmony, in simplicity with a clear purpose.

We have an enormous task in front of us and we need a vision for it. Liliana Kopp had a vision for religious life going to the essentials and leaving behind everything that has trapped especially women for centuries: buildings and habits, rules and ranks, and the evil of power that destroys even more than the desire for money and sex.

The words in the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 30:15-20 **resound like a very actual message: CHOOSE LIFE** by listening to the Lord, loving Him, following his ways... so that you and your offspring may live in the land that has been given to us as a gift.

Jesus in the gospel of Mathew Mt 6: 25-34 moves us for the worries that trap us every day to observe the birds and the flowers and the whole of nature; how each creature works and follows its own laws and processes. We are encouraged to worry for the reign of God, for bringing about his justice and love.

We are at a crossroad and this moment is decisive. It is so important that each one of us may discover her calling and remain faithful to it...

We might describe the challenge before us by saying that the historical mission of our times is to reinvent the human. I say *reinvent the human* because humans, more than any other living form, invent themselves. We can only do this if we understand that each individual is not only different from the others but if we understand that each one of us carries the numinous mystery whence the universe emerges into being. This we might identify as the sacred depth of the individual.
Thomas Berry

Where can we turn in this time of turmoil and confusion?

- To the wisdom of indigenous peoples
 - _ because they really have an intimacy with the natural world
 - _ they follow the sequence of sunrise and sunset, the sequence of seasons, deeply connected to the earth and her fruits, celebrating always life in a magnificent liturgy.
 - _ they also developed an interpretation of life and death, suffering and death passed on from generation to generation expressed in their customs, rituals, songs as well as in the art and poetry from which we can learn.

- To the wisdom of women excluded for so long from the project of the human
 - _ Women are able to join the knowing of the body to that of the mind
 - _ to join soul to spirit, intuition to reasoning, feeling consciousness to intellectual analysis, intimacy to detachment, subjective presence to objective distance.
 - _The human is a single enterprise that brings together women and men, elders and children. So, too the earth is a single enterprise composed of land and sea, rain and wind, plants and animals and humans...Nothing is itself without everything else.
- To the wisdom of the traditions: basic teachings about the fulfillment of the human in the larger functioning of the Universe
- To the wisdom of science
 - _The universe has come into being as a constant transformation over time. We have come to realize that the universe is more a cosmogenesis than cosmos.

Science awakens us to a new understanding of what it is our real fulfillment as humans to move from an individual to a sense of identity with an emergent universe is a transition that has not been accomplished by any of the world's spiritual traditions.

"The universe is a communion of subjects rather than a collection of objects". This new vision shared by theologians and science people give us a complete different understanding of our place in the universe and our relation to all different forms of life.

From diversity, to union we pass by subjectivity to reach out to communion. This is the way for our community.

Existence itself is derived from and sustained by this intimacy of each being with every other being in the universe.

This is not a fashion, something we should add to our curriculum. This is who we are and who are called to be.

One in diversity, subjectivity and communion.

