

BRO. JAMES FACETTE

Celebrating 60 years of profession

I grew up in the cultural/religious milieu of the nineteen forties and fifties in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. My early education was in public and Catholic religious schools. I attended the Marianist Don Bosco high school and joined the Marianists in 1952. I am very grateful to my family and the Marianists for my formation and blessings of a lifetime.

I developed and remain a Christian, speaking the language of faith, God and belief--biblical religion is all about renewal, promise, and liberation. With Vatican II, I rode the wave of hope, change and renewal. Gradually and steadily I have become conscious of a larger spiritual project, one that transcends and includes any specific tradition. A post-traditional spiritual worldview appeared that could survive and thrive in a scientific age. Evolutionary spirituality, a time-developmental understanding of the cosmos is reinventing religion that we have dedicated ourselves to. We now know considerably about the 13.7 billion years of universe existence from the Big Bang through star and galaxy gravitational formation, to Supernovas and planetary systems, the 4 billion years of Earth development, slow mineral and biological evolution, to humans with our religions and cultures until the present moment.

The direction of the universe is a promise that what happens in this world has the potential to make a difference, not just in the affairs of society today, but in the larger development of consciousness and spirit in the universe itself. The Christian story is ultimately a story of the future, a subtle spiritual whisper that calls out to us from both the depth of biblical revelation and the heart of the cosmos itself, suggesting that what goes on in this world may be connected in some small way to the evolutionary destiny of the universe.

“In the modern world, we feel the tension between two religious vectors or two poles. One is the traditional withdrawal from the world—the desire to find peace in some Platonic heaven up there or in some sort of mystical present or some eternal now. Then there’s another pole that comes from being part of a modern world in which political and scientific revolutions have taken place. There is beginning to emerge a feeling that this world—I mean the whole universe, both cosmos and culture—is going somewhere. There is a drama that is unfolding before our eyes, and we wonder if we shouldn’t be part of that. Teilhard de Chardin set out to try to find some resolution between these two poles. He saw that there is communion with God and then there’s communion with the earth.

But there's also communion with God *through* the earth. He resolved the tension by rediscovering the biblical idea that God is not *up above* but rather *up ahead*. In other words, everything that happens in the universe is anticipatory. The world rests on the future. And one could say that God is the one who has future in His very essence." -- Catholic theologian John Haught.

Today, our planetary existence outlook is decidedly bleak—vast, extreme changes in the functioning of the Earth systems of geology, chemistry, the hydrological and other Earth cycles, Climate Change, pollution, wars, violence, consumerism, patriarchy, anthropomorphism... As Thomas Berry tells us, "We must go far beyond any transformation of contemporary culture. . . . None of our existing cultures can deal with [our current world] situation out of its own resources." In addition to creating new cultural establishments, we must enable our very mode of being human to evolve. But I do not mean something implausible or fanciful. I mean what simply amounts to growing up. Rather than become something other-than-human or superhuman, we are summoned to become fully human. We must mature into people who are, first and foremost, citizens of Earth and residents of the universe, and our identity and core values must be recast accordingly. This kind of maturation entails a quantum leap beyond the stage of development in which the majority of people live today. And yet we must begin now to engender the future human."

Traditional monastic communities and religious orders always had among the world's religions—that of service, inspiration and empowerment. These entities give up all for the sake of serving the whole. This would characterize any association, order or community committed to spiritual practice and sacred service on behalf of the larger mutual goals of the species.

However there is a larger deeper meaning beneath the role monastics have often played. Throughout history, individuals have always questioned the assumptions and narratives of the culture of which they were a part. Their experience led them to ask new questions—or at least to recognize that new questions were needed. This tended to happen when their own daily lives ceased to make sense to them.

What would the world be like today if no one in the past had heard a calling to set themselves apart, go deeper, and ask new questions about "where we come from, why we are here, and where are we going."