



*The Assembly of the Whole: Chicago June, 2019 Weaving Together Unstoppable Charity*

*These times beguile us with more Questions than Answers but we Sisters of Charity know the answer is Love. One Large Life Circulating through All...  
Evolving in Harmony with the Becoming God.*

I am deeply grateful for this invitation to speak with all of you. In fact, I am truly surprised that you showed up for this talk knowing so little about me other than, “that I am family”. I have written no books, am not on any sister’s talking circuit but here we are together... so again thanks for coming.

*Gracias, por su confianza, thanks for your trust.*

It is a real joy to be with family!

I did meet some of you in Rome to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vincent and Louise. I must say that event, among many others, has me thinking in larger contexts, in larger sweeps of time.

I also recently celebrated my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and found myself simply praying quietly in the mornings, “I AM....” with a big smile. I AM.... I still AM....I evolved... Yes, **I evolved: ...to never stop EVOLVING!** Wow the gift of being human. I admit I say this at times .now with a little worry/fear ... a little differently at 80....

Likewise, we can say, four hundred years ago, we Sisters of Charity evolved... Yes, we evolved to... **never stop evolving.**

Many of us are personally standing at the edge... as our evolution, our expected transformation, seems speeded up because of our ages.

As Congregations, we are standing together at the edge, as our evolution/transformation continues...now with fewer numbers joining us in the same ways, but like always, we are open to new forms of incarnation new ways to ensure that the **evolution of Love will never stop!**

How do we stand? Do we stand: with trust... with passion... with some fear... with a little sadness ...with deep faith in Mystery present?

**I suggest** we stand with all of these feelings ....**but I know we do stand together.**

The Federation is a ready- made gift waiting to be explored more creatively. Together, we have more wisdom, more creativity and more courage to face the future with hope. We must share successes in these times of immense challenges, as well as, lift each other up when painful decisions must be prayed into.

These few days we will see and relish examples of creative ways we still heal with tenderness, speak with truth and move forward as **seasoned mapmakers of uncharted spiritual territories.**

We really do not think ourselves into a new way of living. We live ourselves into new ways of thinking. (That has been our pattern)

For us, ministry has been and still is fundamental, our prayer life and community life support our ministry. We have been faithful to our charism, by **living** fully in each context... by staying awake and accepting the challenges presented to us over these 400+ years.

I want to suggest that evolution is not the background to the human story. It is the human story. We have been evolving and we will never stop evolving!

Let me repeat the long title of this talk:

*These times beguile us with more questions than answers. However, We Sisters of Charity Know that Love is the Answer. One large Life Circulating through all...Evolving in Harmony with Divine Becoming.*

*Now I am going to add an extra phrase...*

*We cannot stop the becoming of God....God becomes what God loves. and we love God by continuing the same Pattern*

The older I get the more I love questions that keep me searching and raising more questions.

Actually, I like questions that have no answers ...more than I like answers that I cannot question!

I am here to raise questions out- loud. I want to suggest some things that might shake us up a little... about our faith, our theology, and our present reality as individuals, as individual Congregations, and as a Federation.

So let us start with simply saying: **“Trinitarian faith says that... God is relationship itself...loving relationship.**

The names of the three “persons” are not as important as the relationship itself...that is where all the power is. Trinity is not just a teaching about the life of God...but also a teaching about personhood. This was made so clear by Catherine LaCugna, in her classic book, *God For Us*. In fact, she tells us, as do the scientists today, that everything is related, everything is connected. **There are no strangers.**

**What was budding in the minds and hearts of Vincent and Louise is now flowering, there are no strangers, kind of our mantra.**

LaCugna insists that the life of God does not just belong to God alone. The foundational good news is that creation and humanity have been and continue to be invited... to be drawn into this flow of loving relationship. LaCugna tells us we praise God by building right relationships and sin is in destroying right relationships.

We are not mere spectators of this loving. Everything and everyone is invited into this three- part harmony,... this holy communion,...this radical relationship. Humanity and the Universe are created in this image of community, in the image of the trinity... everything is holy...everything is connected. God is the life force of everything, of everyone. What Original Blessing....We really need to marinate in this. So let’s start!

For so many centuries we have come to live insulated and isolated from the Natural world...we are not really able to hear, see, and feel her presence, her aliveness. We were not viewing all of creation as soaked in this holy spirit of Life, the holy spirit of Love.

In fact, Jesus was born into an already God-soaked world! We come **from** Love and we are moving **toward** an ever more inclusive love, a shared *perichoresis*..

I want to suggest that something happened to all of us when we finally saw planet Earth from space. That image had an enormous impact on us

spiritually... and it still does. Yet, that event was not supposed to be an *epiphany of the soul*. In fact it started out... the mission to the moon...it started out ...with nationalistic goals to win the race to the moon.

It began as a competitive challenge and ended up teaching us something about the necessity of co-operation. It started out as a materialistic and technological venture and ended up in spiritual territory transforming us all. Yes, real **soul stuff**.

We could see in a new way what Vincent and Louise saw...so many friends of God saw. We could see in a truly VISIBLE way the INVISIBLE being revealed.

We could see with a more unitary consciousness, that we are all kin to everything, that we are all connected, and that we are responsible for all. We could see in a new and wonderful way our responsibility for this fragile, beautiful, planet earth, and all of the life it supports.

I want to suggest, our lack of focus on the mystery of the Trinity, our centuries of seeing it only as an expression of the Imminent life of the GODHEAD, is related to all of our seeming blindness to the within-ness of this planet, to the sacredness of all.

Are we ready to admit we have trespassed on the fullness of God by trying to lock God in a box, a religion, a gender? Will we try to mid-wife new metaphors for this creative energy and power that continues to invite us to renew the face of this earth? Will we try to get others, believers and non-believers, young and old, to join us and to pool our creativity, to find ways to nourish and sustain us in the midst of our broken world?

Can we, do we, really hear the words of the poet, Elizabeth Browning:

*Earth is crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God;  
But... only she who sees takes off her shoes ...*

Can we, do we, really hear the words of the poet, Emily Dickenson:

*In the Name of, the Butterflies, the Bees, and the Breezes, Amen*

Can we accept the global responsibility to develop a new kind of spirituality that can help all people live a life of dignity on this planet and develop a new consciousness of the oneness of the earth as well as all of her people? I reminded us that we are seasoned spiritual mapmakers. Let's get to the drawing board!

Teilhard de Chardin, the French Jesuit, paleontologist and geologist, declares **love is the very physical structure of the Universe.**

Teilhard was convinced that: gravity, atomic bonding, orbits, cycles, photosynthesis, ecosystems, force fields, electromagnetic fields, sexuality, human friendship, animal instinct, and evolution all reveal an energy that is attracting all things and beings to one another in a movement toward greater complexity and diversity ...and ironically also toward unification at ever deeper levels.

This Creative Energy is quite simply, **Love under many different forms. God becomes what God loves.**

It gets more interesting, listen....I want to suggest Incarnation did not just happen one time two thousand years ago. Incarnation has been working throughout the entire arc of time, and it will continue. This Love/energy is unstoppable. It is like a tsunami wave. Our world is an endless ocean of Agape loving. God's ecstasy is the Universe unfolding. The Ecstasy of God is this self-creating Universe. God becoming what God loves. God becoming you, me, and us, (SC's.) It is not imperative to look for the Second Coming but rather FOREVER COMINGS.

God did not just start talking to us with the Bible or the church or the prophets. Do we really think God had nothing at all to do for 13.7 billion years?

The radiance of Divine Presence, the movement of Love/Energy has been glowing and expanding since the beginning of time, before there were human eyes to see or know about it. Creation... be it planets, plants, butterflies or bees... was not just a warm up for the human story. The natural world is its own holy and God-filled story.

Every gift of food and water, every act of simple kindness, every ray of sunshine, every mammal caring for her young, all of it emerged, evolved from this original and intrinsically good creation. We humans, were meant to know and enjoy this ever-present reality

I want to suggest that this is the spiritual paradigm- shift our world needs...God is not a Being but Inter-Being, radical relationship. I want to suggest we do not look at the Trinity as observers, as outsiders. Rather we become awake to the mysterious invitation into this dance of love, into this wave of love that is unstoppable. Let us swim and dance in a spirituality birthed out of the awareness that we truly praise God when we build right relationships...with people and all species on this planet. Will we let this sink into our souls and have it shape the way we touch our planet, our borders... the way we use and share our human resources? All that is, is birthed by this loving Movement...this incessant Verb.

Vincent and Louise instructed all of us to ask forgiveness of those receiving our help...receiving our love. How well they knew that the giver is the getter and the getter is the giver. It truly is love touching love.

Stories: tonight we share our food  
Eucharist /on the back of pick-up

Both of these stories bring me to understand a participatory consciousness. I see that what the other is... **is some of my life-energy living there...**and I see what I am...**I am some of the other's life- energy living here in me.**

I can no longer divide the world into we's and they's!

That applies to us as well. We do not lose identities... we realize our deeper connections...another gift of the Federation...as we seem to be shrinking we are more open to a larger circle of SC's loving. All those who have gone before us, who are here at this Conference,, and with all of those you brought here because they live in you! Being human is to celebrate our connections.

In some ways, my boundary has become less definite, less hard and sealed off. My selfhood has become more radiant streaming out from me... an inter- communion of love energies. So when I say I Am... it implies... may you be. God becomes what God loves and we must repeat the pattern!

Beatrice Bruteau is convinced...that to be a person is to be an act of loving, a process, a verb, a flow of Agape. She holds that God's ecstasy creates the world... and the world's ecstasy realizes God.... so we are right in the middle. Yes, God's ecstasy is the Universe un-folding, this self-creating universe!

We are one with God in this great birthing of God, as Cosmos. The Universe is the Theotokos, the God-bearer---we are Theotokoi, God- bearers. God's Presence has enchanted all matter from throughout all of history.

I am going to share some memories that haunt me, memories that awakened me to see implications of the gift of being human. I invite you to do the same with yourself or with others during our time here. We can also do the same thinking about how each of our congregations have lived moments of awakenings... moments when we realized we were evolving, transforming, risking. experimenting, shifting our focus, resisting, fearing, hoping, enjoying....

According to Ilia Delio, to be catholic, to be human... is to live in conscious evolution... to be actively engaged in this unfinished universe, as co-creators, of justice, peace, mercy, and compassion. Catholicity is a virtue of relatedness, a dynamic energy of whole making, of solidarity.

(Story: quoting Gustavo Gutierrez....Woe to you who come dry-eyed....woe to you who come without feeling the pain of the world)  
To be human is to have open arms, to build, to heal... to let the life- force pass through us and meet the very life force of the other.

Looking to our futures, personal and congregational, we continue to love with an energy that is generous and healing. We are still releasing this call to others to join us in new ways... deeper and more flexible ways... not totally planned, more open and diverse. Yes, we are opening our arms to embrace and create new patterns that will keep evolving that will be more flexible, less fixed, less owned ...but surely imbued with the love and wisdom of years of letting new contexts shape us, new theologies inform us, and let God become part of this cosmos by all of life here.( Matter matters...)

We stand here with deep trust still searching that despite our limited resources, our aging, this circle of compassionate loving will grow wider and deeper to a point where nothing or no-one will be living outside of it.

We can anticipate with hope that there will be other searchers, other believers, who will be reading our new spiritual maps, who will know how to find new territories, and become the new **spiritual mapmakers**.

Yes, we need to widen the circle of people, widen the circle of friends who will choose creatively to become conscious of who we are: divine love incarnate. We need to widen the circle and RUN with it...

These women and men are already alongside of us, close to us in our many ministries. They are on the protest lines of many movements, calling us to speak, shout, and act in solidarity: about bondings, not bombings, restorative justice, not punishment.

These are the people, who know that a real life **is not** measured by the bigger paycheck, by the greener lawn, the fattest portfolio, but a real life is measured by giving yourself away.

A real life, is where you get to see and meet the within-ness of everything... where you feel the force within you and within the full moon, the raging river and the newborn. A real life is only where you get to see the within-ness of your lover, yourself, your wisdom sources, the holy books, the pain, the suffering, the lethal absence of hope in so many places, the wars, the poverty, the lies---really see and touch the within-ness of everything.

Our family of charity will be all who are determined to keep asking the questions, keep searching, keep discovering, keep staring, and keep imagining different solutions to new problems, future scandals in society.

They will mid-wife economic systems built more on solidarity, built more on the tenderness between pueblos They will know the story from within... this understanding of the ongoing evolution of a world so long emerging, so long evolving... but clearly off course.

Paula D'Arcy says it so well: *God comes to us disguised as our lives.*

Tomas Merton said it this way: *The gate of heaven is everywhere.*

Yes, authentic Christianity is not so much a belief system. But rather it is a life and death system, that shows us how to give away our lives, how to give away our love, and eventually how to give away our death... basically **how to give away** and in doing so,... **how to connect with the world, with others and with God.** This week we can *create heaven in small doses*, by giving away our dreams and fears... our hopes and joys. Let us celebrate our long and vibrant evolution.

(Thoughts to share in stories after the break.)

Celebration of the Armistice of WWII

Learning how to play Gin Rummy

Racism / Women's Movement/ Vatican II/ Martha's son/The visitation



I thought I was ready for El Salvador the brutal face of innocent suffering so intense. Nothing prepared me for the inhumanity expressed. What made it livable was my awareness of who I belonged to in the moments. Ask yourselves, whose are you....?

Faith is the incubator of their Hope

A **trust** that it all means something. FAITH

A **trust** that it is positive and going somewhere good. HOPE

A **trust** that this includes me and even defines me. LOVE

Works Used:

Beatrice Bruteau. *Radical Optimism: Practical Spirituality in an Uncertain World.*

God's Ecstasy: the Creation of a Self-Creating World.

Catherine Mowry LaCugna. *God for Us, Trinity and Christian Life.*

Cynthia Bourgeault. *The Holy Trinity and the Law of Three: Discovering the Radical Truth at the Heart of Christianity*

*The Wisdom Jesus: Transforming Heart and Mind—a New Perspective on Christ and his Message.*

Elizabeth Johnson. *Creation and the Cross: the Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril*

Ilia Delio. *Making All things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness.*

*Personal Transformation and a New creation: The Spiritual Revolution of Beatrice Bruteau*

Heidi Russell. *The Sources of All Love: Catholicity and the Trinity ( Catholicity in an Evolving Universe).*

John Haught. *New Cosmic Story: Inside our Awakening Universe.*

Megan J.Clark. *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the The Praxis of Human Rights.*

Richard Rohr. *The Universal Christ. How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything*

*We see, Hope For, and Believe.*

*The Divine Dance; Trinity and Your Transformation.*