



Dry Bones
Hear the Word of the Lord

Christ the King
Lent 2022 Retreat

Music: Yusuf/Cat Stevens, *Father and Son*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6zaCV4niKk>
audio

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Welcome!

- Things to know...
 - Please wear a mask indoors.
 - There is no cost for breakfast or the retreat.
 - Please pick-up handouts at the back table.
 - Book raffle – please get a free ticket if interested.
 - Questions or Comments?
 - Hey Deacon Tom...
 - Email tjakobs@ctkparishfs.com
 - Cell 479-420-4772
 - There is also a podcast for this retreat.
 - No audio recording of our sessions
 - Donations are appreciated but not expected.

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Sources and References

1. *Teilhard de Chardin* series of books, by Louis M. Savary
2. *Discovering Girard*, Michael Kirwan
3. *Psychology & Religion*, C.G. Jung
4. *The Power of Myth*, Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers
5. *A Brief History of Everything*, Ken Wilber
6. *Why Be Catholic*, Richard Rohr and Joseph Martos
7. *My influencers/teachers* – Richard Rohr, Jerome Kodell, Thomas Keating, James Finley

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Welcome!

Why is this “a retreat”?

- We’re offering respite from punishing images of God and living in a society that finds faith suspect.
- We are re-centering ourselves on the core of being a Christian, which is trusting God and growing in our relationship.
- We are “retreating” from daily life to re-center our faith.



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Welcome!

Why haven't I heard this stuff before?

- There are many "streams" within Catholicism; many acceptable ways to express Truth.
- My faith stream includes the following core beliefs...
 - God is love. God is never violent. God invites you to a trusting, evolving relationship. You are made in the image of God.
 - You are not God, but you are not other than God.
 - Frequent, personal prayer is necessary to deeply know God. It is your intention to pray that is most important.
 - Christianity's core is relationship, not individual salvation.
 - There is no division between church and the world. Both are holy, both are evolving, both are created by God.

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Rationale for our Retreat

We are at a unique time in Christianity...

- For 2,000 years the Church has taught from a perspective that...
 - there were "first parents" and salvation history unfolds starting with them.
 - Jesus came to earth and returned to heaven above.
- Over the past century we've learned that these stories are not scientifically or historically accurate.
 - This shift in understanding HOW the world came about makes it harder to transmit WHY it came about.
- To grow and share our faith, we need to translate the wisdom of our Tradition into this new worldview.

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Rationale for our Retreat

When I talk to people about God, I usually hear the following assumptions about God whether they are believers or not...

- God is in heaven, which is out there somewhere.
- God is judging us. If we are bad, we won't get into heaven.
- God is a good guy and in control, but there is a lot of suffering.

It is from this understanding of God that people talk about their struggles with religion.

- If they are not believers, or struggling with their faith, they doubt that the above is true. I doubt it too.

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Rationale for our Retreat

People struggle with 3 aspects of Catholicism...

- 1) The Mass combines love language with explicit and implicit threats of violence/punishment from God.
 - Why do we confess our sin and ask for God's mercy and forgiveness? Is it because...
 - some of our thoughts, words and (in)actions have harmed our relationship with each other and God?
 - if we don't God will punish us?
 - Do we celebrate our holy thoughts, words, and (in)actions?
 - Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth... we worship you; we give you thanks; we praise you for your glory.
 - Are we being taught to fear God? Are we afraid of God?

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Rationale for our Retreat

Many people struggle with 3 aspects of Catholicism..

- 2) Science teaches that the driving force behind creation is evolution, but Church teaching relies heavily on Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, and Original Sin. If Church teaching insists on a false premise, then isn't all its teaching suspect?
 - Failure to embrace the complicated truth leads to religious fundamentalism and atheism (two sides of the same coin).

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Rationale for our Retreat

Many people struggle with 3 aspects of Catholicism...

- 3) Church sexual and financial scandals, combined with sexist and secretive management structures, make it difficult for many people to trust the church hierarchy.

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Rationale for our Retreat

In summary, over the last century humanity has undergone a transformation...

- 1) Love matters. It is no longer ok to act violently, especially towards someone we say we love. Even for God.
- 2) Reality matters. Using disproven information to teach about God makes the teaching suspect.
- 3) Integrity and accountability matters. We no longer blindly trust any institution.

This is a crisis of trust in the institutional Church, not necessarily a crisis of faith in God.

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Rationale for our Retreat

We will address these issues by offering a nonviolent, modern theology that embraces core salvation principles and scientific knowledge. We will focus on three topics:

- 1) A nonviolent theology that embraces evolution, the need to worship as a community, and the practice of personal prayer.
- 2) "Why be Catholic" from a perspective of Tradition and our responsibility to bring about the kingdom of God.
- 3) Why we struggle to believe in the nonviolent God revealed by Jesus.

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Foundation for our Retreat

Our retreat presumes that both science and Church teaching are true. We won't spend time proving either.

- If you are interested in the argument for evolution from a Catholic perspective, I found this helpful...
 - <https://washtheocon.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/EvolutionOriginalSinI-corrected.pdf>

This retreat includes information from previous retreats. If this is your first retreat, wonderful! I will not presume knowledge from previous retreats.

- Lent 2019 – What's love got to do with it?

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Weekly Format

- Comments or questions from last week
 - From 'Hey Deacon Tom' or other communications
- Yahweh prayer
- Scripture reading
- Tom's Presentation (stop by 11AM)
- Table discussion (10 minutes)
 - Name one thing that you will think/pray about this week.
- Blessing (out the door by 11:15 AM)

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Weekly Topics

Week 1: **How did we get here?**

- The origin of a violent God
- The cataclysmic changes of modernity
- Translating between old and new worldviews

Week 2: Why do we suffer?

- An evolutionary and mimetic understanding

Week 3: Jesus' message of love

- The death of scapegoating

Week 4: The importance of Church

- Feeding our conscious and unconscious

Week 5: Pulling it all together

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- Yahweh Prayer
- Scripture, Ez 37:1-11, 12a, 14a NRSV

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know."

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Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them.

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Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: ... I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live..."

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Who Are You Lord God & Who Am I?

- We have done 12 retreats together. We keep probing how faith and science work together to bring us closer to God. At the core of our seeking is St. Francis' question above.
 - *Is the role of the Church to answer or ask this question?*
- It is our job as Christians (and as humans) to plumb the depths of these unanswerable questions.
 - *It is the journey that produces wisdom and helps us to live lives consistent with the will of God.*
 - *We have Church teaching and the saints to guide us.*
 - *When we think we have the definitive answer, we feel compelled to defend it and this impedes the journey.*
 - *Yet as we journey, we come to know God better.*

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Are Faith and Science Compatible?

Here's what the Catholic Church teaches...

- *Faith seeks understanding*: it is intrinsic to faith that a believer desires to know better the One in whom he has put his faith and to understand better what He has revealed... (CCC 158)
- Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself *nor can truth ever contradict truth.* (CCC 159)

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Definition of Worldview

We “see” truth from within our worldview. It is the context through which we interpret everything. It is our underlying assumptions that we rarely question. It is the milieu that we live in.

- Milieu = ambient, atmosphere, climate, context, environment, setting, surroundings.
 - The sun rises in the east
 - Earth below, heaven above
 - God is in heaven
 - Science + rational thought = reality
 - Death is the end of life

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The Old Worldview

What is the origin of violent gods?

- The short, simplified answer is that humanity needed a God like this to keep order in large groups.
- Before 10,000 BC communities were limited to ~50 people and gods were not violent...
 - No governing structure to punish selfish behavior.
 - People knew each other and selfish behavior could be handled by expelling perpetrators.
 - Larger communities imploded due to selfish behavior.
- Then the idea of a watchful, punishing God came into being and communities started to expand.

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The Old Worldview

Until the 18th century, the common understanding of how creation occurred was...

- God created the world in the past.
- Earth below, heaven above.
- God created our “first parents.” Every person descends from them.
- The world is static – it doesn’t change for the most part.
- God is perfect, so creation must have been perfect.

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The Old Worldview

Over time Christianity developed a theology based on Genesis, chapter 3 that goes like this...

- Our first parents were created perfectly but chose to sin.
- God’s punishment for sin was death and suffering for all of humanity. (Gn 3:16-19)

To the woman he said: I will intensify your toil in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. To the man he said: ...In toil you shall eat [the ground’s] yield all the days of your life. ...By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken;

For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

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The Old Worldview

Over time Christianity developed a theology based on Genesis, chapter 3 that goes like this...

- The only way to make up for this sin is to stop sinning, but somehow we can't, so Jesus came to save us.
- For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (Jn 3:17)*
- Now God forgives us through Christ – yet we still die and suffer.
 - We hope for paradise in heaven.

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The Old Worldview

In the 16th century, Protestant reformers added the idea of substitutionary penal atonement to Catholic salvation theology...

- God the Father sent Jesus to pay for our sins through his death on the cross. Jesus substitutes for us and accepts our punishment (death) for our sins.
- For our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. (2 Cor 5:21)*
- This is not Catholic theology, but it is believed by many Catholics.

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The Old Worldview

This understanding of how creation and God works became part of our “worldview” until the 20th century

- It looks backwards – if only we hadn't sinned.
- God loves us, but God is also why we suffer and die.
- God is in heaven – separate from us.
- God created a long time ago and is pretty much done.
- We are trying to recapture what we lost through sin by being good.
- We hope that God will not punish us.
- Why God allows suffering is a mystery.

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Cataclysmic Shift in Worldview

From the 18th through the 20th century a new worldview evolved...

- Truth is linked to what is observable.
- Science supersedes religion for truth.
- Science proves that creation is evolutionary.
- The universe is 14 billion years old.
- The Earth is 4 billion years old.
- Life started 1 billion years ago; humans evolved around 500,000 years ago.
- Humans evolved simultaneously in several places.

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Cataclysmic Shift in Worldview

From a scientific perspective:

- The world was not made in 7 days – it is still evolving.
- There was no single set of parents for all of humanity.
- There was no perfect moment of sinlessness.
- There is no place for Jesus to ascend to that can be reached using clouds.

The Biblical creation stories are scientifically incorrect.

- Does this mean that the Bible is not true?
- Does this mean that Church teaching is not true?

In a word, no. How can this be?

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Cataclysmic Shift in Worldview

The truth within Scripture...

- The truth in the Bible and Church teaching is about God and our relationship with God – not science or history.
- The creation stories are about why the world came to be, not how it came to be.
 - The writing style is storytelling not investigative reporting.

So how do we reconcile the wisdom within the old worldview with our knowledge of the new worldview?

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Fr. Teilhard de Chardin

The theology of Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), modernized over the past 60 years, integrates evolutionary science with religion. Teilhard does this by looking at the “how” of evolution from a “why” perspective.

- This makes other scientists uncomfortable.
- It is also makes church people uncomfortable.

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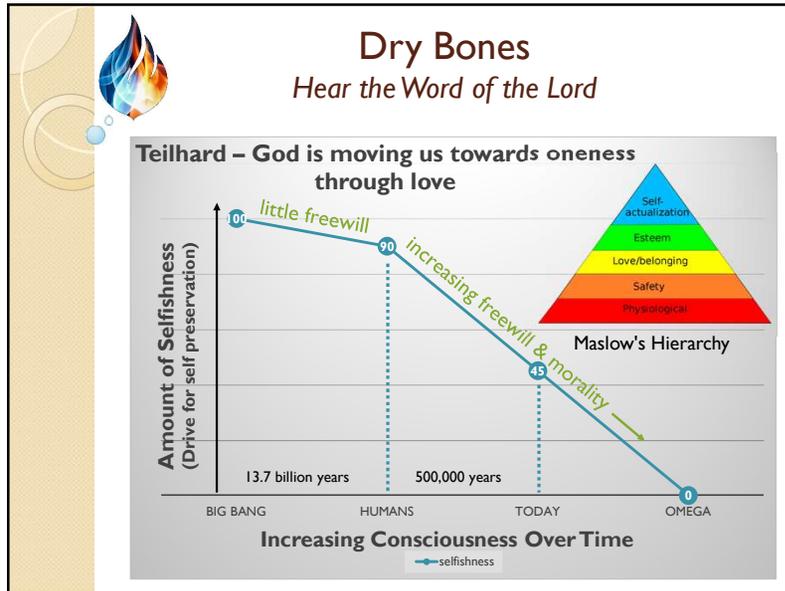
Fr. Teilhard de Chardin

Fr. Teilhard agreed with other scientists on the evolutionary mechanism (the “how”), but he saw an overarching “why” that they miss...

Attraction ➡ Connection ➡ Complexity ➡ Consciousness

- Why is this important?
 - Creation is not just driven by random mutations and survival of the fittest – there is a direction to creation.
 - Increasing consciousness makes it possible for us to recognize when we are selfish and when we love, and grow in our humanity.

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Fr. Teilhard de Chardin

- Fr. Teilhard tried to integrate science and Church teaching, with mixed success. Theologians continue this work today.
 - It is a difficult problem. The 'how' is changing so quickly it is nearly impossible to extract the 'why' wisdom.
- What is important here is Fr. Teilhard's vision of "truth cannot contradict truth", not how each scientific principles correlates to Church teaching.
- Fr. Teilhard sees the world...
 - as integrated with God.
 - as eternally moving towards wholeness, towards the fullness of creation.

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Fr. Teilhard de Chardin

- Fr. Teilhard invites us to embrace of truth of new insights and grow in wonderment of who God is and we are.
- Fr. Teilhard provides an optimism about God and the world, a sense of adventure as we journey towards our destiny of oneness with God.
- As science learns new things, our response should be one of "wow, what does this teach us about God, given what we know from Church Tradition?"

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Cataclysmic Shift in Worldview

- Our journey is not about being right, it is about being open to the mystery of how God reveals Godself through evolution.
- It is not about defending our worldview but embracing the wonder of God in each worldview.
- We seek God by distilling the wisdom of God from the milieu that hides God from us in each worldview.
- In this worldview, you really matter. Your actions impact the future in a real way. We're not here "killing time" as a predetermined world unfolds. We are co-creators with God.

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Summary

1. Our foundational principle: Faith and science cannot truly contradict.
2. We are on a quest – Who are you Lord God, and who am I?
3. We understand truth *and express it* from within our worldview. There is no other way to do it.
4. We are living during a major transformation of worldviews, from static to dynamic.

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Summary

5. Evolution is not a threat. It can revitalize our faith!
 - We are moving forward, not looking backwards.
 - We are becoming human within evolutionary time.
6. God's evolving creation informs our quest of, "who are you, Lord God, and who am I", and invites us to be co-creators.

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Table Discussion

We are evolving to be fully human.

Name one thing that struck you in today's presentation and that you will think/pray about this week.

Insights to share with the whole group?

Next week – Why we suffer and die.

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