

Universe Story Retreat, June 14 - 19, 2013

(A contemplative retreat co-sponsored by the EcoSpirituality Group and the Theology Committee of the American Province) (photos: Mary Evelyn Tucker; Jean Newbold, SHCJ; Jeanne Ronzani, SHCJ, who managed finances, Terry Moran, Mary Evelyn Tucker, Jean Newbold, Terri MacKenzie, SHCJ, organizer; group during optional sharing)



Mary Evelyn Tucker of Yale University and Jean Newbold, SHCJ (European Province) provided input for the 26 retreatants at St. Raphaela Center, Haverford, PA that fleshed out words in the *2010 General Chapter Enactments*: to "explore ever more deeply and in diverse ways the mystery of the Incarnation." Using quotes from theologians, mystics, poets and contemporary scientists, and insights and exercises from other traditions, they called us "to expand how we understand and live our incarnational charism." Of the six not-SHCJ participants, one is an SHCJ associate, several had been taught by, or worked with SHCJ, and all were comfortable with the Cornelia-infused flow.

Mary Evelyn's Holy Child heritage was obvious as she shared her personal journey and the faith component of her ministry at Yale, at international meetings, and in the three-part production: *Journey of the Universe* www.journeyoftheuniverse.org. Retreatants viewed this film plus one on Thomas Berry, the geologist who developed the insights of Teilhard de Chardin. Her presentations followed four themes related to the Universe Story: Orienting, Grounding, Nurturing, and Transforming. Her well-attended open presentation was titled "The Ecological Spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin," with whose material she is a recognized expert. Her final talk was *Dwelling in Love*.

Many retreatants became increasingly sympathetic to Jean Newbold, scheduled to follow a presenter whose authentic self and engaging manner had so won us. We soon discovered this sympathy had been wasted. Jean gave her presentations in St. Raphaela's glass-enclosed chapel where she made splendid use of her excellently-prepared talks, power points, and music. Continuing the overall theme of Love Story, she moved to Finding Jesus in the Universe Story, and she developed these topics: The Divine Radiates from the Depth of Matter; Re-envisioning our World; Re-envisioning Christianity in an Emerging, Evolving World; and a Reflection on the Cosmos, Earth, and Jesus. Jean's handouts were rich in content and beauty.



Terry Moran's liturgies and homilies exemplified more words from our Chapter: "Rooted in tradition, we move with faith and trust" — in this case, into a future marked by an expanded understanding of incarnation.



Even the weather cooperated, nor was the proximity of the US Open a distraction. Mary O'Connell's wake and funeral times blended nicely after minor time adjustments. On the final day, two sisters (one Mercy, one St. Joseph), acting on the accepted wisdom of forming small groups of those already interested, initiated an inter-congregational group of Sisters to continue exploring these themes. They exemplified more words from our Chapter Enactments: "Among those who encounter the Society's mission are people who experience a personal call to prayer and

service and find nourishment, support, and a way of being church in their relationship with us."

One of the not-SHCJ retreatants who found this true wrote in her note of gratitude: "The retreat was *perfect* — deep, inspiring, even fun!" Another wrote "This retreat experience way surpassed my expectations." An SHCJ wrote: "This precious space has enabled us to sink more deeply into the immensities, and let's hope we can now participate more effectively in the flourishing of life"

We give thanks to Sister Marie Heenan, RSM and everyone at St. Raphaela Center for their unstinting help and support. We thank the Sisters at Rye and New Sharon, plus the ESG members who could not participate, for their prayers. They, and the seven who signed up but couldn't come, had a special place in our prayers. Thanks to Tobie Tondi and the Theology Committee for co-sponsoring; to Margaret Mary Bell, who joined us to tape Mary Evelyn's presentations; and to Emma Nolan for assisting Jean with her media components. Finally, we thank the American Province, whose financial support made possible this experience.

We are exploring ways to share material from the retreat.

