

The Universe Story

In the beginning was the dream. And the dream was with God, and the dream was God. The dream was with God in the beginning. Through the dream all things came to be. Not one thing has its being but through the dream. And out of this, mystery created Light!

- 1.** Out of unimaginable light, 15 billion years ago, the universe was dreamed into being. It contained all the light, energy, and potential for everything that would ever come to be, all contained within the vessel of hydrogen.
- 2.** 14 billion years ago, that explosion of energy began to slow down, cool, differentiate; and all the primal stars and galaxies became its shape. Stars are the original hydrogen and helium, and together they consume themselves to create the other heavier atomic elements.
- 3.** 4.6 billion years ago, our mother star, in the Orion arm of the Milky Way galaxy, having consumed and sacrificed herself, collapsed. In the intense energy of that collapse, she was transformed into a supernova, exploding her stardust into space, and birthing all the new elements which would take shape as Earth's body, what we call chemistry.
- 4.** 4.5 billion years ago, that exploding stardust began to slow down, cool, and condense into a community of planets around the mother star, our Sun. The solar system was born.
- 5.** 4.1 billion years ago, Earth, a privileged planet in its size and in its distance from the Sun, slowly cooled, and gradually formed an atmosphere, oceans, and land mass.
- 6.** 4 billion years ago, gradually, within the oceans, more complex arrangements began to take shape. Gradually, amino acids formed, and finally, proteins. These were the first simple cells, and in, by, and through them, Earth awakened into life.
- 7.** 3.9 billion years ago, Earth learned to take nourishment from the Sun. Through these simple-celled microbes, she learned to eat sunlight, to nurse from the Sun. This is photosynthesis. It is the first transubstantiation--Sun energy into Earth life. And that dynamic laid the pattern for all future life forms, that each must receive nourishment from another, and give itself in return to become nourishment for another.

8. 2 billion years ago, through this intimate act of eating, the early Earth absorbed her first carbon membrane, slowly releasing a waste--oxygen. And, through this oxygen, formed a new atmosphere, a new membrane within which all future life would develop.

9. 1 billion years ago, life was mysteriously drawn toward union, and the first simple-celled organisms began to reproduce sexually. Different strands of genetic memory were combined in the new offspring. This opened up infinite new possibilities. Around the same time, organisms began to feed on other organisms, and that relationship formed the basis of the community in which each would develop.

10. 700 million years ago, the first multi-cellular life forms emerged, all still within the sea, and creativity expanded rapidly throughout the waters of Earth.

11. 510 million years ago, the first fish forms with back bones developed, encasing the Earth's earliest nervous system and the development of her sensory organs in these primeval fish forms.

12. 425 million years ago, the first life forms left the oceans, having learned to develop a membrane within which they could carry their own water, and through which they could withstand the pull of gravity. They became the first land plants.

13. 395 million years ago, amidst a planet of vast, green vegetation, the mysterious development and the sudden extinction of the dinosaurs occurred. At the same time, the first insects developed, forming an interdependent community with the land plants, a pattern which continues to the present.

14. 210 million years ago, responding to the intense pressure at her core, Earth shifted, her land mass cracked. The continents drifted apart and formed. The Atlantic Ocean was born.

15. 150 million years ago, the first birds took flight, and in and through them Earth broke into melody and song.

16. 120 million years ago, the first flowering plants emerged, concentrating their life energy and memory into seed, making protein in the form of seed available for the mammals who were yet to come, and, in their flowering, bringing color and fragrance to Earth.

- 17.** 114 million years ago, the first placental mammals developed, warm-blooded creatures who, like the supernova, carry their unborn young within their own bodies, and who nourish them from their own substance both before and after their birth.
- 18.** 40 million years ago, the various orders of mammals were complete, and inhabited the various continents of Earth's body.
- 19.** 3.3 million years ago, the current ice ages of Earth began, shaping the mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes, and streams, which form our present bio-regions.
- 20.** 2.6 million years ago, the earliest humanoid types evolved from the primate mammals. Creatures with brains and nervous systems complex enough that in and through them Earth awakened into self-conscious awareness of her existence.
- 21.** 40,000 years ago, modern Homo sapiens began developing the earliest language patterns, shaping the earliest tools, and occupying Australia and Africa.
- 22.** 20,000 years ago, reflecting on their experience of a fertile, abundant, and regenerative Earth, humans, began to image and shape female deities and form matrilineal societies.
- 23.** 10,000 years ago, humans learned to cultivate plants selectively and to domesticate animals, and were now settled throughout Asia and the Americas as well.
- 24.** 5,200 years ago, yet unable to understand the diversity among them, humans began an age of chronic war-making, a behavior pattern which continues into the present.
- 25.** 5,000 years ago, megalithic stone structures appeared throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas, marking a transition to warring, powerful, male images of the Divine.
- 26.** 3,200 years ago, the exodus of Israel out of Egypt.
- 27.** 2,500 years ago, a flowering of ethical and spiritual consciousness exploded throughout China and India through the teachings and works of Confucius and the Buddha.

28. 2,300 years ago, highly evolved classic Mayan civilization flourished and spread throughout the Americas.

29. 2,000 years ago, Jesus revealed the deepest mysteries of the universe and spoke an compromising truth about the unity of all peoples.

30. 400 years ago, the people of Europe invaded and colonized all the other continents, uprooting indigenous people, confiscating their lands and cultures, initiating a period of slave trade and migration, a trauma which has not yet been transformed.

31. 200 years ago, humans initiated intense revolutions, intellectual, social, scientific, industrial, all of which have shaped our present age.

32. 65 years ago, humans discovered an expanding and unified universe, and the interior depths within its atomic structures, for the first time.

33. (25) years ago, on a journey to colonize the Moon, humans turned around and beheld the face of the Earth as a whole for the first time.

34. Today, in this moment of grace, all humans can finally understand their common origin story, embracing and celebrating their different stories within a single Earth community in a single sacred universe. Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps it is just the beginning of the world.

-Inspired and presented by Sister Miriam Therese MacGillis at a workshop held at Loyola in July, 1998.

Notes from Jeannie McCabe's 2017 presentation:

I used CD/Album: *Pachelbel: Forever by the Sea* by Dan Gibson. I had it downloaded on my phone and went to a Bluetooth speaker. Music needs only be quiet instrumental so as not to overpower the reading. Can take many forms.

Reading/walking takes approx.. 20-25 minutes for the meditation itself. Reflection can be as long/short as desired and either at the site or later.