

A Guide for Praying
the Stations of the Cosmos



Ignatius Jesuit Centre
A Place of Peace

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a guide for walking and praying **the Stations of the Cosmos**

Introduction

The Stations of the Cosmos visually depict the story of our emerging universe. There are 25 stations, each telling of a particular moment of grace in the history of our universe. Each of us can point to moments of grace in our own unique personal history. For example, the moment you were born is a very special moment of grace. So too, the moment light began and the moment eye-sight first developed on Earth - are significant graces worth embracing.

The stations are laid out in a spiral pattern so that, as you walk, your path is expanding. The universe itself is expanding and has been since the moment it began. In fact it expands at a very particular rate that is necessary to hold things together. If the expansion were any faster everything would burst apart. Any slower and the universe would collapse in on itself.

The stations are set at distances proportional to the expanse of the 13.8 billion year story. Each step you take represents millions of years. There are longer distances between some of the stations. You will walk around the spiral several times before humans come on the scene. An "extension" on the spiral, around the time when homo-sapiens evolved, allows more of that portion of the story to be depicted.

We have an important, wonderful story of creation in the book of Genesis. And yet, as the theologian Fr. Denis Edwards points out, we don't really know *how* exactly God created the world. The Stations of the Cosmos provides an opportunity to pray with the detailed information science is revealing to us about this extraordinary creation.

Let God reveal the story of the Cosmos to you as you walk the stations. It is part of your own personal history, part of your sacred story, and God has a perspective to reveal to you. Tracing our ancestral lineage has become very popular. The story of the universe also tells us of our lineage.

**Begin by walking through
the lane of Norway
spruce trees and into the
center of the spiral.**

Standing at the bowl in the center of the spiral, you might like to close your eyes for a moment. Be aware of your breath, listen to the sounds around you, feel the air and the light of the sun on your face. Then imagine being all the way back in time, back before any of what we know existed, back to when there was only God. And God has a dream and a longing to bring love into form. God is dreaming the world. God is even dreaming of you.



*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and
the Word was God. The Word was
in the beginning with God. All things
came into being through the Word,
and without the Word not one thing came into being. What has come
into being in the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people.
(Gospel of John 1:1-4)*

Perhaps read the Gospel passage a second time substituting the words *the Dream* for *the Word*.

When you are ready, walk to the first station.

Take your time. Let God speak within you as you read the passage that accompanies each station.



Station 1

The universe flares forth - Some 14 billion years ago: a great ball of fire expands outwards into the creation of the Universe.



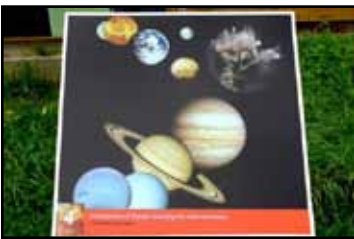
Station 2

Emergence of galaxies, including our Milky Way Galaxy -A billion years later: stars are born, live and die. As larger stars die, they explode and become supernovas.



Station 3

Formation of stars, including our sun - 4.6 billion years ago: Our grandmother sun becomes a supernova. She gives up her life in an explosion that gives rise to our star, the Sun.



Station 4

Development of planets, including our earth and moon - 4.5 billion years ago: Our solar system forms. Comets & meteorites pelt Earth's thickening crust as it cools off. The moon is born when Earth is impacted by a Mars-sized body that causes Earth to tilt to the side, giving rise to the seasons of the year.



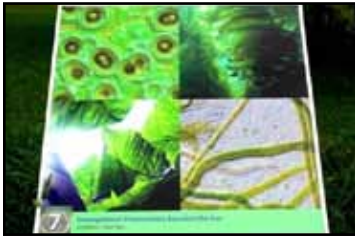
Station 5

Early Earth is covered with water - 4.1 billion years ago: Earth has grown from dust particles to a large, hot, molten planet with a thick rocky crust. Volcanoes expel hot magma to the surface and the steam condenses above Earth. Torrential rains form rivers and the great seas.



Station 6

Emergence of the first living cells in the seas - 4 billion years ago: The rich chemical brew in the seas brings forth invisibly small creatures that we call bacteria, the first living cells.



Station 7

Development of photosynthetic bacteria in the seas - 3.9 billion years ago: Bacteria invent ways to capture energy from the sun which they use as food. In the process they give off oxygen. Sr. Miriam MacGillis suggests that photosynthesis was the first transubstantiation.



Station 8

Meiotic Sexual Reproduction of early cells - 1 billion years ago: Organisms begin to eat one another and sexual reproduction of early cells begins.



Station 9

Multicellular organisms & the diversification of life in the seas - 600 million years ago: Eye-sight develops & Earth sees herself for the first time. In the oceans, soft-bodied animals begin to evolve. Over the next 70 million years, shells, jaws, beaks & skeletons develop.



Station 10

Plants venture forth from the sea and gymnosperms develop - 425 million years ago: Worms, mollusks and crustaceans leave the water & breathe air. The first plants & insects evolve. The nearly weightless insects become the first flying creatures.



Station 11

The time of the dinosaurs - 235 million years ago: For 170 million years these creatures flourish. Dinosaurs develop parental care. Some stay with their young after they hatch, nurturing them toward independence.



Station 12

Flowering plants - 230 million years ago: Flowers evolve with an array of colours, perfumes and delightful nectars.



Station 13

Birds emerge - 150 million years ago: Foreleg bones evolve into wing bones, jawbones into beaks, and scales into feathers.



Station 14

Marsupial mammals evolve - 125 million years ago: Marsupials don't develop a placenta in the womb, therefore give birth to their young after a short gestation period, then carry them in an external pouch.



Station 15

Asteroids collide with Earth; mass extinctions - 67 million years ago: Primates appear. A huge asteroid causes the extinction of the dinosaurs. Small mammals move quickly to occupy available ecological niches.

The images at the remaining stations will speak for themselves with fewer words. Continue to listen with your heart & head as to how God is with you & speaking to you.



Station 16
Cenozoic Era - amazing creativity - 65 million years ago



Station 17
Mammalian life blossoms - 40 million years ago



Station 18
A particular mammal emerges: homosapiens- 200,000 years ago



Station 19
Aboriginal societies & primal worship - 40,000 years ago



Station 20
Agricultural societies - 9,000 years ago



Station 21
Development of the world's religions - 6,000 years ago



Station 22
The rise of modern science - 500 years ago



Station 23
The Industrial Revolution & increased human-induced extinction of species - 300 years ago



Station 24
We see Earth from space - 1966/1968



Station 25
This present moment of grace

You may want to close your prayer here, or perhaps continue with the Stations of the World religions, and/or the Ecological Stations of the Cross.

Take a few moments to reflect on what you have experienced. What do you feel? What did you experience about God? ...about the Universe? ...about Earth? What graces did you receive during this prayer? What one word or phrase expresses something of your experience?

The Stations of the Cosmos is dedicated to Fr. Thomas Berry, Passionist priest & acclaimed historian. Berry is the author of The Dream of Earth and The Great Work: Our Way into the Future. Berry died June 1, 2009. The opening of these stations was on May 31, 2009.