

# The Prophetic Voice of the Church in the Context of Evolutionary Consciousness

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**ABSTRACT:** According to the author of this article, Catholic Social Teaching is the prophetic voice of the Church. As such it needs to be reframed for today's world within the emerging worldview of integral consciousness. Our personal and collective consciousness (often referred to as our culture) evolve in identifiable stages towards more inclusive, cooperative and caring behavior. Integral consciousness enables greater adaptability, agency and the ability to solve more complex global problems. In order to move from a fractured world to wholeness we must come together around a vision of the One Earth Community. The article concludes with six thoughts on how to live into the deeper consciousness necessary for working for social justice.

**KEYWORDS:** evolutionary consciousness, integral consciousness evolutionary worldview, social justice, Catholic social teaching, earth community

As Christians who want to bring about transformation in today's world, which is plagued by violence, injustice, and untold suffering, we cannot be a part of the solution without understanding our faith, especially Catholic Social Teaching, in the light of Evolutionary Consciousness. By Evolutionary Consciousness I mean a complex convergence of emerging perspectives such as evolution (both physical and cultural); the new cosmology (including the expanding universe); spiral dynamics; integral theory; and the insights of quantum physics (such as entanglement and the oneness of all that exists). We are blessed with writers such as Ilia Delio, OSF, John Haught, and Richard Rohr, OSF, to name but a few, who are lighting our

way with new insights into how these new perspectives are impacting our faith. These new insights are transforming our understanding of the very nature of God and our role as Co-Creators with God of a future that is more inclusive, compassionate, integral, and loving of all of creation. Understanding evolutionary consciousness has sustained my work to combat sex trafficking here in Cambodia and help young women reclaim their lives through high-level skill training by enabling me to deal with the complexity and scope of this issue.

#### PART I: A TALE OF TWO WORLDVIEWS

I was privileged to enter the Maryknoll Sisters just as Vatican Council II started in 1962. However, in our postulant year we were learning about the seven mortal sins and other specific aspects of morality—basically the same traditional theology our parents and grandparents had learned. But soon we began to learn of the incredible transformational insights of Vatican II as they were being promulgated. They were teaching us to do Social Analysis. The word *justice* began to leap out at us from every page of scripture. In a few years we would be studying Liberation Theology. We read the works of Theilhard de Chardin. These were such hopeful times! We learned to see the world as a whole and believed we could be part of the transformation of this world. We could now work together across the globe with people of other faiths to bring about more just economic systems, have more just foreign policies in the US, cancel the debt of poor nations, etc. Our hope knew no bounds! We were called upon by the Vatican Council to be nuns ministering *in* the modern world not only in Catholic institutions as semi-cloistered workers. We discovered the God of the Poor, the God of Justice, and we were fully committed followers who moved out of our institutions and into the neighborhoods of the poor. This change was not just about location, it was a total change of worldview. Looking back on it, I would call it an evolution of our worldview from *Traditional* to *Modern*. As the Christian scholar N. T. Wright explains, worldviews “are like the foundations of a house: vital, but invisible. Worldviews are that *through* which, not *at* which, a society or an individual normally looks.”<sup>1</sup> We were changed, not just as individuals but as congregations. Congregations of women religious continued to reflect together on an ongoing basis and this proved to be the catalyst for even further evolution of our worldview in the decades to come.

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<sup>1</sup>N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992).

*Half a Century Later—What Happened to All That Hope?*

But here we are in 2018 and I cannot help but wonder what happened to the wonderful new world that we thought was coming into being. Where is the justice, equality, peace, care for our Earth, nuclear-free world, and the new just economic systems that we longed for and worked for? The arms race has gone on unabated, we have nuclear instability on a global scale, and the division between the rich and the poor is widening. In the decades following Vatican II, we believed that if we could just get the truth to the American people and to powers-that-be in Washington they would recognize the truth of the evidence we presented about the negative consequences of US policy on people in the countries where we lived and worked. We believed that they would act to change foreign policy. But even with the “facts,” they didn’t see things the way we did. A book I read thirty years ago came back to mind recently. The two authors who were economists predicted what they called “the Third Worlding of the United States” and the prediction now seems right on. The 1 percent is amassing more of the wealth of the US and similar patterns are occurring in other countries as well. What happened? Were we church people just naïve after Vatican II? What did we miss? Where did we get it wrong?

It wasn’t until I began to read the works of philosopher Ken Wilber that I began to understand what might be happening. It was Ken Wilber’s book *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision For Business, Politics, Science, and Spirituality* that introduced me to Spiral Dynamics and Integral Theory, helping me understand the tremendous complexity of our world today especially in terms of our different worldviews.<sup>2</sup> Spiral Dynamics as understood by Ken Wilber, Don Beck, and Clare Graves explains that all personal and collective human development progresses through *identifiable* levels of development and evolution that become increasingly more holistic, complex, inclusive, and compassionate. Today evolution is not so much about physical evolution but *cultural evolution* which revolves around worldviews.

*Two Critical Insights of the Evolutionary Worldview*

In his book *Evolutionaries: Unlocking the Spiritual and Cultural Potential of Science’s Greatest Idea*, Carter Phips presents two key insights of the evolutionary worldview about the meaning of consciousness.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Ken Wilber, *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision For Business, Politics, Science, and Spirituality* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2000).

<sup>3</sup>Carter Phips, *Evolutionaries: Unlocking the Spiritual and Cultural Potential of Science’s Greatest Idea* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2012).

### (1) Individual Consciousness Evolves

Our internal universe, when seen from an evolutionary perspective, is not static. It is not fixed. It is not set in stone, either by God or a genetic code. The self develops and evolves. Human consciousness develops and evolves. Evolution evolves. Julian Jaynes, the author of one of the most popular books on consciousness written in the last decades, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, shocked readers in the 1970s by suggesting that consciousness, in the way we understand it today as an introspective interior space, only came into being relatively recently in human history, perhaps 2,500 to 3,000 years ago. Jaynes attributed it to the developmental structures that had not yet formed in the brain. He noted that much of early literature represents a struggle to find a deeper sense of *subjective* selfhood, but for the most part the characters simply do not refer to themselves in any kind of way that suggests internal reflection.

The characters of the *Iliad* do not sit down and think out what to do. They have no conscious minds such as we say we have and certainly no introspection. The beginnings of action are not in conscious plans, reasons, and motives; they are in the actions and speeches of gods.<sup>4</sup>

### (2) Our Shared Internal Lives, Our Collective Interior, Is Our Culture—and It Evolves

The very capacities of our awareness, the structures that make up our internal universe and collective cultures have undergone change, even dramatic change over time. And some have taken this insight a step further, suggesting that not only has consciousness changed but that *it has evolved through a series of identifiable stages*.

In a sense, there is an earthquake happening in human culture right now, and there has been for the past couple of hundred years. We have been captivated by the spell of *solidity*, the fallacy of fixity, the illusion of immobility, the semblance of stasis, but the evolution revolution is starting to break that spell. *We are moving*. We are part and parcel of a vast process of *becoming*. We are going somewhere. It is a slow but irrevocable revelation, dawning on our awareness. The very structures that make up our own consciousness and culture are not the same as they were one thousand years ago, and in one thousand years they will be substantially different from how they are today. The optimism experienced by people who adhere to the evolutionary worldview stems from a conviction not only in the fact of evolution but

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<sup>4</sup>Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2000), 76.

in the wholesomeness of the evolutionary process, despite the suffering, conflict and chaos it inevitably entails. In the hearts of *Evolutionaries*, the future is already bright.<sup>5</sup>

These are relevant not only to individual consciousness but to a particular culture as a whole in the process of cultural evolution. Many of us will already be familiar with the concept of a series of identifiable stages of growth from child development studies. Most psychologists agree that, in general, narcissism is a normal state of childhood that is ideally outgrown, at least to a significant degree. *Development*, in fact, can be defined as *a successive decrease in egocentrism*. The young infant is largely wrapped up in its own world, oblivious to much of its surrounding and most human interactions. As the infant's consciousness increasingly grows in strength and capacity the infant becomes aware of itself, and of others, and eventually puts itself in others' shoes and thus develop care, and compassion—none of which it is born with.

## PART 2: THE OLD AND NEW PARADIGMS IN THEOLOGY

### *The Old Paradigm: Expiatory Suffering*

The premise of John Haught's brilliant book, *Resting on the Future: Catholic Theology for an Unfinished Universe*, is that science has now demonstrated beyond all doubt that our universe is unfinished.<sup>6</sup> It is still coming into being and expanding. Haught posits that the world is a work in process and provides a fertile new framework for thinking about the meaning of Catholic faith and life. The themes he discusses take us from the older paradigm or worldview to a newer paradigm more in line with the implication of living in an unfinished universe. In the older paradigm there is a connection between the idealization of social order and the demand for expiation. Our new awareness of an unfinished universe, one whose internal arrangement has never been fixed or finalized, raises serious questions about the meaning and value of expiatory theologies of suffering and redemption (God demanding the crucifixion and death of Jesus in order to redeem the human race and each of us from sin). An expiatory understanding of suffering survives and thrives in the shadows of an idealized cosmic order.<sup>7</sup> It presupposes a metaphysics in which change means the defilement of an initial integrity. The myth of an integral original creation and of a primal innocence followed by a sense of defilement has deeply

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<sup>5</sup>Phips, *Evolutionaries*, 26.

<sup>6</sup>John F. Haught, *Resting on the Future: Catholic Theology for an Unfinished Universe* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

<sup>7</sup>Haught, *Resting*, 89.

influenced our sense of sin, conversion, virtue, and God. Today it still holds power over the spiritual and moral thinking of countless Catholics as well as most of our church liturgies. Expiatory theology construes the world in such a way that (divinely established) order can be restored only if a sufficient price in suffering is paid to repair the fault that befouled the original design. Evolution proves there was no original design—no Garden of Eden—and no fall from grace. We have been evolving from less to more consciousness.

The theme of reparation by paying a penalty in pain can lead at times to hopelessness and self-hatred. What happens to the hypothesis of “suffering as expiation,” however, when theology encounters the suffering that has occurred throughout evolution? How long can theology continue to ignore the Darwinian discovery that most of life’s suffering and death—especially the innocent suffering of nonhuman life has nothing to do with guilt? Haught also questions whether the expiatory vision of suffering is any longer compatible with the doctrine of divine providence.<sup>8</sup>

### *Suffering as Education*

Another traditional theological proposal has attempted to shore up the idea of human suffering as pedagogy. This interpretation tries to make sense of suffering by moving it from the horizon of expiation to that of education. It argues that the meaning of suffering lies in its being part of a divine discipline for the development of character or “soul.” Our sufferings are indications that providence is watching over us by deliberately setting up the natural world as a rugged school essential to our developing a spiritual backbone and moral fiber. Thus God can be excused for “chastising” those whom God loves. In view of the new evolutionary picture of life, not to mention such human horrors as the Holocaust, both expiation and education seem to have spent most if not all of their theological utility. The evolutionary portrayal of life’s long epochs of suffering now provides data that call for a drastic reconfiguration of the Catholic theological thought including Catholic Social Teaching. Without this reconfiguration, Catholic Social Thought is likely to become increasingly irrelevant to scientifically-schooled generations.

### *The New Paradigm: The Evolutionary Worldview*

Again, according to Haught, the new scientific setting is one in which our universe must be pictured as still coming to birth. We live in the age of *evolutionary biology and Big Bang cosmology* which understands the world as a work in progress. *Wayfaring Hope* expands our horizon, renews our spiritual lives and

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<sup>8</sup>Haught, *Resting*, 87.

widens our sense of the coming kingdom of God. We look for fulfillment up ahead, in the direction of new creation and a fulfillment of the cosmic process yet to appear. It encourages us to wait for the advent of a God who draws the world toward new being from out of the future.

“Persuasive love” is how God relates to our world according to Sr. Catherine Vincie:

God creates the world as distinct from God’s self, giving it the autonomy and freedom to develop according to the laws of chance, complexification, and self-organization. This voluntary distancing of God is precisely God’s way of presence and involvement. In summary, Haught argues for a God who is a wellspring of novelty; who is large enough to encompass the New Universe Story; who allows the world to be exactly as it is and does not overwhelm it with presence, but influences through persuasive love.<sup>9</sup>

Brian Swimme, who received his Ph.D. from the department of mathematics at the University of Oregon for his work on singularity theory, argues that in order to move forward humans will require a “larger, vaster, and deeper context—a deeper cosmology.”<sup>10</sup> In the absence of a more holistic and inclusive framework, modern society will not be able to see the cause of our contemporary problems or their solutions. Today, rapid change is the norm and new technologies, the internet and mass migration have brought new ideas and worldviews literally to our doorstep. The concept of entanglement in quantum physics demonstrates anew to us that we and everything in the universe are interconnected and thus what we do has a major impact on others. These new insights have already had a major impact worldwide and we can now speak of an Evolutionary Worldview.

### *Integral Consciousness*

The world is getting more complex and *integral* consciousness represents our abilities to see through an increasingly complex lens so that we will evolve greater levels of effective adaptability and agency. An important characteristic of people whose worldview is Integral is that they can solve complex global problems. Einstein reminded us: “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” We need creative new systems thinking. Ken Wilber sees people with an Integral worldview as generally free of ego-based needs that tend to take things personally and so they are able

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<sup>9</sup>Catherine Vincie, *Worship and the New Cosmology: Liturgical & Theological Challenges* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 56.

<sup>10</sup>“Where Does Your Faith Fit in the Cosmos?: Editors Interview with Brian Swimme,” *U.S. Catholic*, June 1997, 12.

to engage others in more open dialogue. Integral thinking can be recognized by the large amount of ideas, connections and complexity that it introduces. Integral consciousness's starting point is an overarching vision about a system (an individual, group, organizational, national, planetary and/or cosmic level) and then determines what the system needs to grow and blossom. In order to do so, people with an integral worldview will go beyond personal and strictly human-orientated interests to be more inclusive. They have the ability to look far into the future and, at the same time, watch things close at home and integrate the past. They often have visionary and revolutionary ideas about the future. There is an understanding that differences can be integrated into interdependent, natural flows and that chaos and change are natural. Their spirituality is transformational.

### PART 3: THE PROPHETIC VOICE OF THE CHURCH MUST BE REFLECTIVE OF THE INTEGRAL WORLDVIEW THAT STRIVES FOR WHOLENESS

Catholic Social Teaching belongs to the Prophetic Voice/heritage of the Church and in today's world it needs to emerge and be re-envisioned from within the Integral Worldview. The prophets were not part of the official structures of Judaism. Rather, they were called to go to the religious and political leaders of their time to call them to repent and care for the orphan, the widow and the stranger, and to remember God's covenant of love with them.

In the synagogue, Jesus announced his role: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18–19). Both the prophets and Jesus had a vision of a future—the kingdom—where love, inclusion, compassion and cooperation were the principles of life. The structures of the early church were based on selling what one had and sharing it with those in need and sharing meals and Eucharist in homes.

Over the centuries since the death of Jesus and the adoption of Christianity by Emperor Constantine there developed, alongside the prophetic church, an Official Voice in the Church that emphasized dogma, fixed liturgies, and hierarchical structures. This Voice reflects the Traditional worldview that we see in a number of the hierarchy, especially in the Vatican but which does not include Pope Francis. The recent investigation into the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in the United States (LCWR) is an example of the Traditional worldview among some Church hierarchy in the Vatican and the US confronting the postmodern worldview of congregations of women religious in the United States. The investigation was finally peacefully ended when the



newly elected postmodern Pope Francis spoke of his appreciation of the ministries of the Sisters and of LCWR. Pope Francis, who is from Latin America, would have been impacted by both Vatican II and Liberation Theology, which emphasized the preferential option for the poor, the dignity of indigenous peoples, and care for the Earth. Some members of the hierarchy living within the Traditional worldview are now critical of Pope Francis himself, though he insists that the Church must be open to the advances of science and other fields of study such as psychology, sociology, and economics. Many universities, both Catholic and secular, Civil Society Organizations, and most Congregations of women and men religious manifest the qualities of the postmodern worldview as organizations. Many of the individuals in these institutions have already made or are poised to make the “monumental leap” to integral transformation. What will that mean?

*Moving Forward: Focus on the Vision of the Kindom*

In this third millennium of Church history and this pivotal time of human history, all of us who are aware of the tremendous division in our world see the need to heal those wounds and strive for wholeness. We must move our energies from resisting the worldviews and structures we have outgrown, and come together around a vision of the kindom—the One Earth Community—and live into an emerging future that is evolving through the energies of love, inclusion, compassion, and cooperation. This is where the leading edge is today. As Christians we might say this is where the Spirit is leading us, and in that space we are truly empowered to fulfill our prophetic calling.

The vision will not be limited to the Catholic Church, but will be articulated by the world’s religions and spiritual traditions and people of good will. The Parliament of the World’s Religions in their Declaration on Climate Change (2015) spoke of the Earth Community in terms of the UN Earth Charter:

The future we embrace will be a new ecological civilization and a world of peace, justice, and sustainability, with the flourishing of the diversity of life. We will build this future as one human family within the greater Earth community.<sup>11</sup>

Likewise, the Parliament of the World’s Religions in their *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic* explained the importance of a vision that galvanizes hope and action on behalf of the one Earth Community:

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<sup>11</sup>“Declaration on Climate Change,” Parliament of the World’s Religions, 1993. <https://parliamentofreligions.org/civicism/petition/sign?sid=4>.

Our world is experiencing a *fundamental crisis*: A crisis in global economy, global ecology, and global politics. The lack of a grand vision, the tangle of unresolved problems, political paralysis, mediocre political leadership with little insight or foresight, and in general too little sense for the commonweal are seen everywhere: Too many old answers to new challenges.

In such a dramatic global situation humanity needs a vision of peoples living peacefully together, of ethnic and ethical groupings and of religions sharing responsibility for the care of Earth. A vision rests on hopes, goals, ideals, standards. But all over the world these have slipped from our hands. Yet we are convinced that, despite their frequent abuses and failures, it is the communities of faith who bear a responsibility to demonstrate that such hopes, ideals, and standards can be guarded, grounded, and lived. This is especially true in the modern state.

We know that religions cannot solve the environmental, economic, political, and social problems of Earth. However they can provide what obviously cannot be attained by economic plans, political programs, or legal regulations alone: A change in the inner orientation, the whole mentality, the “hearts” of people, and a conversion from a false path to a new orientation for life. Humankind urgently needs social and ecological reforms, but it needs spiritual renewal just as urgently. As religious or spiritual persons we commit ourselves to this task.<sup>12</sup>

What is so heartening about the Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions is knowing that we are not alone—there is a growing consensus that we need a grand vision to embolden us and this grand vision is the one Earth Community. This consensus among religions and civil society organizations will only get stronger and more urgent. Young people around the world are so filled with idealism and this only needs to be focused and articulated around the vision of one Earth community to unleash all that incredible energy in service to this aspiration.

### *A Crucial Task: Sharing the Vision*

In the past, we shared and taught CST mostly through the print media and in the classroom. In today's digital age, we must use technology to invite others to participate in developing the vision and bringing it to life in their own lives and where they live. We must appeal not only to their minds but to the whole person including their hearts and emotions and all of our five senses. We must share the vision in a way that is not only personal but also collective

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<sup>12</sup>*Declaration Toward a Global Ethic*, Parliament of the World's Religions, 1993. Notably drafted by Hans Küng. <https://charterforcompassion.org/understanding-our-differences-and-similarities/parliament-of-the-world-s-religions-declaration-toward-a-global-ethic>.

so that it brings them and their family and friends together into this vision of a world of peace, justice, and joy. Think of the “I have a “Dream” Speech of Dr. Martin Luther King and the imagery of children of different races playing together. This is what stirs the imagination about what is possible. If we can feel the Vision in every fiber of our being we will pursue it.

We must use every form of art to stir up hope, joy, gratitude and a sense that together we can create a new world. This includes things like YouTube videos, which reflect a sense of the oneness of our Earth Community and of a better world in a marvelously fun and memorable form. They make concepts such as One Earth Community and entanglement something to dance about. We need to call forth the artists in our midst to spread the word about what God is up to in our world.<sup>13</sup>

#### PART 4: HOW WE MIGHT LIVE INTO INTEGRAL CONSCIOUSNESS

If we want to take part in creating a better world we need to create a better *us*, both individually and collectively. Mahatma Gandhi wisely stated: “You must be the change you want to see in the world.” Living in integral consciousness requires self-awareness, mindfulness, a life-long commitment to learning and development both personally and in a community of people who believe in and are committed to the thriving of the one Earth Community. The following list presents some ideas that might help us to live into the deeper consciousness necessary for working for social justice.

##### *(1) Focus On the Vision of the Kingdom and Its Values*

We are called to be co-creator with God of the future where the energies of love, inclusion, compassion and cooperation are the wellspring of our relations with all of creation. Our Vision(s) will motivate and energize us to move forward into the unknown future with hope and fruitful action for the benefit of the One Earth Community. We need to remind ourselves and each other daily of our Vision—in our meditations, prayers, at the beginning of meetings, on posters on our walls, on our organizational stationary, website etc.

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<sup>13</sup>See, for example:

“I See You In Me’ A Song for Global Peace & Unity,” published by Gbenga Adenuga on January 6, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjyLkXjK69I>.

“Peter Mayer—All the World Is One Lyrics,” published by Kara Becker on December 25, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-ESaQz2IxI>.

“GRATEFUL: A Love Song to the World | Empty Hands Music | Daniel Nahmod,” Published by emptyhandsmusic on November 26, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO2o98Zpzg8>.

(2) *Live in Wayfaring Hope and Blend Our Expectations with Patience*

In examining the process of evolutionary cultural change, Steve McIntosh, in his book *Evolution's Purpose: An Integral Interpretation of the Scientific Story of Our Origins*, noted how cultural evolution has occurred over the centuries:

While it is realistic to recognize that some kind of significant transcendence is now required, it is not realistic to assume that a revolutionary change would produce the kind of sustainable advance that our civilization requires. To be sustainable, the transformation we seek must come about as a result of evolution, not revolution. However, when we look closely and carefully at the historical phenomenon of cultural evolution through the lens of integral philosophy, we can begin to see what can be expected next. The cultural evolution that we need will come to us in the form of a new values-based worldview forged through the interpenetration of increasing problems and newly perceived opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

The transformation cannot be rushed but it will come and we need to live in “wayfaring hope.”

(3) *Live Inward and Move Outward*

As Ilia Delio, OFM reminds us, today:

Our task is to wake up to the truth of our reality. This waking up requires interiority and centeredness. Hence the first step toward justice is focusing the mind on higher-ordered levels of love. Life in evolution requires *living inward and moving outward*; that is, living from an inner unified space of conscious awareness whereby we see the divine light shining through every aspect of our world. Life in evolution means that we are moving not just individually but collectively because we are unfinished and God is doing new things.<sup>15</sup>

Working with our shadow is crucial inner work and will bring light to ourselves and our world.

(4) *Study, Reflection and Pray Together in Person and in Online Communities*

We cannot transform ourselves or our world alone. We need to be in communities of like-minded supportive people who are striving to live a more integral

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<sup>14</sup>Steve McIntosh, *Evolution's Purpose: An Integral Interpretation of the Scientific Story of Our Origins* (New York: Select Books), 190.

<sup>15</sup>Ilia Delio, OSF, “Evolution and Social Justice, Nature Itself,” *National Catholic Reporter: Global Sisters Report* (Aug. 30, 2017), emphasis added. <http://www.globalsistersreport.org/column/justice-matters/spirituality/evolution-and-social-justice-nature-itself-48891>.

life. In order to support our evolution we need to let this new worldview grow in us until it is where we live from and not just glimpse it from afar before it fades and life goes on as before. We need to work with our parishes to share the Vision and Values that will lead to re-envisioning Catholic Social Teaching.

*(5) Appreciate the Role of Complexity in Evolution*

Evolution moves in the direction of ever greater complexity and the evolution of consciousness empowers us to work with this complexity for solutions that benefit all of creation. The internet, mass migration, and refugees seeking asylum are increasing and adding to the complexity of today's world. Understanding complexity and how it drives further evolution is essential to learning how organizations such as the Church, Catholic Universities, other Catholic institutions, parishes and religious congregations can work with it effectively both inside and outside their institutions. How can we deepen our understanding of the dynamics of complexity and approach it from an integral perspective? Do we see complexity as a curse or a challenge and an opportunity?

- Complexity is about *interconnectivity* which means that *when things interact, they change one another in novel and irreversible ways*. Our tendency is to try to simplify everything but in doing so we lose the complexity which we really need to learn to handle. Traditional organizations find it hard to deal with complexity and the rapidly changing realities of today's world.
- In today's complex world, organizations need to *empower their members to network horizontally across the organization and with others organizations* in order that they are in a better position to understand shifting local and global conditions. Only then are they able to develop effective and sustainable solutions for the benefit of the one Earth Community. In the past, only those in the hierarchical positions in an organization received updated information from different parts of an organization or system. The speed and scope of the internet has changed who gets what information, when and how. More extensive and thoughtful feedback from networks and ecosystems throughout the organization is possible and desirable and younger more educated members expect to give feedback.
- Findings from complexity theory indicate that *principles of organizing from such fields as biology and the physical sciences can enhance our understanding* of local and global environments. Principles such as relationship, cooperation etc. are replacing competition as primary characteristics of life and organizations.

*(6) Move Outward to Work with Civic Society so that Imperial Civilization may evolve into Ecological Civilization within One Earth Community*

A new vision is required to move society into a truly Ecological Civilization. As author David Korten writes:

We humans now consume at a rate 1.7 times what Earth can sustain and the richest 8 of us own wealth equal to that of the poorest 3.7 billion. We face a choice. We can continue Imperial Civilization's drive to environmental destruction and wealth concentration. Or we can create an Ecological Civilization that secures material sufficiency and spiritual abundance for all in balance with the regenerative systems of a living Earth. Our species' survival hangs in the balance.<sup>16</sup>

So much incredible work has already been done on this by civil society organizations that are filled with people who have dedicated their lives to understanding and working for social justice and who bring an intellectual rigor and experience to their organizations. Because global structures, systems and problems are so complex and becoming more so, we need to work with civil society organizations to understand profoundly all the complex issues involved and take effective action. Joining our efforts with theirs will hasten the transformation we all have been seeking.

#### CONCLUSION

As we strive to evolve into Second-Tier Integral Consciousness, our experience of God will evolve. We will know and experience a more loving and compassionate God—a God who loves us beyond our ability to comprehend and who respects us so much that this God has been gradually entrusting to all of us and each of us the consciousness, the freedom, the responsibility, the intelligence, and the aptitude to choose the future direction of evolution! Our evolution matters, our worldviews matter, our choices matter.

*Sister Helene O'Sullivan, former President of the Maryknoll Sisters Congregation, is working in Cambodia with young girls and women who are survivors of human trafficking. Sister opened a hostel and enables the young women who often have not finished primary school to complete grade 9 and then attend a hotel training school for two years. Upon graduation they secure positions such as front desk receptionist in 4 and 5 star hotels and are assisted in their transition to independent living.*

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<sup>16</sup>David Korten, "Ecological Civilization: The Vision," accessed May 30, 2018, <http://davidkorten.org/home/ecological-civilization/>.