

# COSMIC WALK



“Mystery generates wonder and wonder generates awe. Today we take a glimpse at the beauty of the Story, something of its deep mystery. It is the story of the universe, the story of Earth, the story of the human, the story of you and me.”

— Ruth Rosenhek

“In the beginning was the mystery, the churning quantum foam of potentiality. Through the mystery all things came to be. Not one thing had its being but through the mystery. Some 15 billion years ago our Universe flashed into existence, lit by the power of the eternal matrix of being. From the quantum foam was born the Universe. Time, space, and energy were the gifts of existence.”

— Ruth Rosenhek

The Cosmic Walk is a walking meditation that offers a glimpse into our sacred origins by connecting the work of scientists with our ongoing spiritual search to better understand who we are and how we came to be.

Sister Corlita Bonnarens, RSM, is the artist who captured in watercolor 25 significant moments in this unfolding story of the universe, giving us a glimpse of the Sacred Mystery that has been at work for more than 14 billion years. Sister Corlita holds master’s degrees in Art and Spirituality. She is spiritual director and facilitator of retreats and workshops around art and spirituality.

We are grateful to everyone who helped bring this walking meditation into reality.

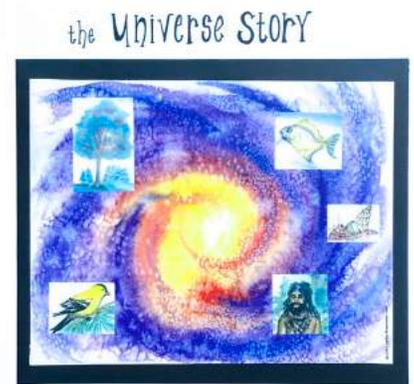
## The Universe Story - A Cosmic Walk Meditation

Watercolor Images by Sr. Corlita Bonnarens, RSM

Text based on work by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry

1. 13.7 billion years ago, the Universe begins as the primordial flaring forth of stupendous energy out of Ultimate Mystery. Hydrogen and helium form and EVERYTHING, all of creation unfolds from them.
2. Approximately 12 billion years ago, the first stars appear. They expand and then collapse, forming carbon, oxygen, sulfur, iron, some of the elements necessary for life. This process continues for billions of years, creating a trillion galaxies, each with billions of stars.
3. 4.6 billion years ago, in the Milky Way Galaxy, a supernova forms and explodes in a flash of brilliance. From this rich and gaseous debris come copper, silver, magnesium and other elements.
4. 4.5 billion years ago, the SUN is born.
5. 45 billion years ago, the EARTH and other planets in our solar system form. Earth is full of fire and creativity. Earth cools, its surface develops a crust. Vapor escapes from its boiling interior, forming clouds. Rain begins: it lasts for centuries, forming the oceans, cooling the surface and hardening it into rock.

*Pause for silent prayer and reflection on the goodness of our creative God.  
We thank you, Creator, for the gift of life!*



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6. 4 billion years ago, BACTERIA emerge; photosynthesis begins. EARTH AWAKENS. Life begins.
7. A little over 1 billion years ago, cells joined with each other for survival and development. Sexual reproduction begins.
8. 600 million years ago, worms and jellyfish appear with the first nervous systems.
9. 500 million years ago, fish emerge. Now the nervous system is protected by bone, a key development for further complexity.
10. 410 million years ago, life moves onto land.

*Pause for silent prayer and reflection on the generosity of our creative God.  
We thank you, Creator, for the gift of life!*

11. 395 million years ago, INSECTS come.
12. 370 million years ago, the first TREES and AMPHIBIANS appear.
13. 235 million years ago, dinosaurs and flowers spread across the earth.
14. 216 million years ago, the first MAMMALS appear.
15. 150 million years ago, BIRDS fly.

*Pause for silent prayer and reflection on the generosity of our creative God.  
We thank you, Creator, for the gift of life!*

16. 25 million years ago, WHALES the largest marine animal, emerge.
17. A little over 2 and half million years ago, the first HUMANS walk on earth.
18. 500 thousand years ago, CLOTHING, FIRE, SHELTER are discovered.
19. 40 thousand years ago, HUMAN LANGUAGE begins. 32 thousand years ago the first musical instruments are made.
- 19a. 11 thousand years ago, Agriculture begins. Humans begin to shape the environment.

*Pause for silent prayer and reflection on the generosity of our creative God.  
We thank you, Creator, for the gift of life!*

20. 3500 BC the rise of Mesopotamian Civilization. A little over 2000 years ago, Jesus was born.
21. In 1543 AD, Copernicus publishes his theory that the SUN, not the earth is the center of the known universe. Earth and the other planets orbit around the sun.
22. Over 400 years ago, the rise of the Modern Nation begins.
23. In 1961, our planet Earth was seen from space. In 1972, the famous "Blue Marble" photograph of planet earth was produced.
24. **TODAY, the story of the Universe is being told as our sacred Story. It continues to unfold in each of us.**



“The cosmic walk, developed by Sister Miriam Therese McGillis of Genesis Farm in New Jersey, is a symbolic re-enactment that helps us enter personally into the story. Participants walk along a long rope laid out in a spiral that represents the entire story of the unfolding and gradual differentiation of the Universe and the Earth from the beginning to the present. It initially seems that it is a walk along a time-line since major events in the history of the Universe and Earth are marked on the rope by small candles at appropriate distances.”

— Mary Coelho