

O'er Every Living Thing—A Communion Reflection—Sam Guarnaccia

WUJA-2017 World Congress, Cleveland, Ohio

Notes from the composer: Sam Guarnaccia

It was an honor and great pleasure to be asked to compose a 'reflection song' for the 2017 World Union of Jesuit Alumni World Congress, 2017, Cleveland. The honor, and *challenge*, was to create a musical expression that could contain the depth and power of St. Ignatius founding vision, and the revolutionary scientific understanding—and mystical vision of the great Jesuit scientist-priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. To ground a great faith tradition in the phenomenal discoveries of 20th to 21st century cosmology—the cosmology of an evolving universe alive with unbounded creativity, in a few words from a 16th century soldier priest, and a 20th century spiritual and scientific visionary, is both an 'act of faith', and an exercise of supreme reason.

The seemingly endless debates between 'faith and reason', religion and science, are evocatively expressed in Albert Einstein's famous "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind"—an epithet that has generated its own generations of debate. The other great 20th century Jesuit scientist priest Georges Lemaitre, who corrected both Einstein and Pope Pius XII, the former for doubting the expansion of the Universe, and the latter for likening the Big Bang to God's initial act of creation, received public apologies from both, and was in turn a tremendous influence on the thinking of Teilhard. Now Pope Francis has called for a worldwide 'ecological conversion', to include ALL people. Himself a Jesuit scientist-priest, Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* has given the world a call to deep scientific understanding, passionate faith, and the assumption of global responsibility for humanities' 'respect and care for the Earth' (Earth Charter), in the spirit of both Ignatius and Teilhard. It is an immeasurable gift that through reason, we may experience the magnificence of the knowable, and through 'faith' the unimaginable mysteries of the un-knowable.

After exploring some of Ignatius' and Teilhard's writings, my wife and creative partner Paula and I chose the following lyric for me to set to music, with the further challenge that it be 'versatile', easily used by children, youth or adults in simple, intimate, personal settings, and expandable for use in experienced choral, instrumental, liturgical or concert settings.

This all embracing host
This bread our toil
This wine our pain.

The whole Earth is my altar,
The world our house,
Our liberty. —(1)

The Earth a-wakes and trembles—
Radiant Word, blazing Power,
Lord, Make Us One.

O'er every living thing—
Which is to come,
To grow, to flower—

Say, 'This is my body,
This is my blood',
My memory. —(1)

The Earth a-wakes and trembles—
Radiant Word, blazing Power,
May We Be One.

***Lyrics: From 'Mass on the World'—Teilhard de Chardin
(1)- From words of— Ignatius of Loyola***

'O'er Every Living Thing', with words primarily from Teilhard's 'Mass on the World', itself a part of his 'Hymn of the Universe', is a phrase that celebrates the sacredness of *every* element of 'the creation', and that the 'communion' is extended to every part of the Universe. Ignatius' understanding that the world is 'our house', and that our 'memory' and 'liberty' are keystones of human freedom and responsibility, are stunning and transformational concepts. This mode of celebration is both profoundly scientific, aligned completely with relativity and quantum gravity theories—and profoundly 'spiritual' in reverencing the entire creation.

The decision for the refrain 'Lord, Make us one' to be finally restated: 'May We be One', is acknowledgement that we are asked to participate knowingly, fully, and responsibly in becoming ONE with each other, the Earth, and the greater whole.

This musical gift to the 2017 WUJA Congress evolved as the emergent/evolving universal cosmology became part of, and aligned with the Congress' theme of Uniting Jesuit Frontiers.

May this music and these words deeply inform, motivate, and bless all who hear and sing them, and become part of a new and universal frontier of love.

Sam Guarnaccia