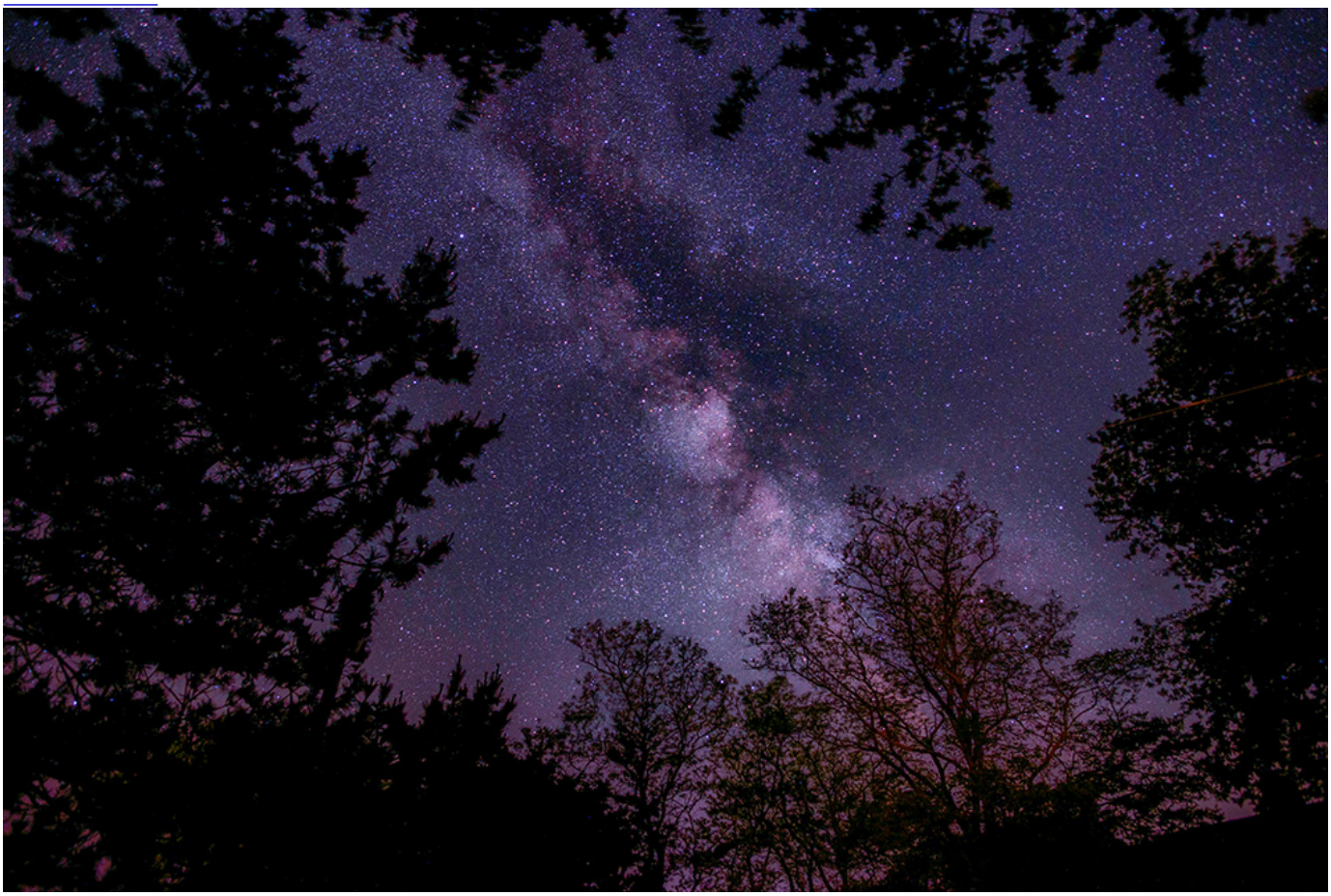
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Contributor

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## Join the Conversation

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"Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die, we can't remember who we are or why we're here."

These words by Sue Monk Kidd in *The Secret Life of Bees* remind me of a story that happened on a Greyhound bus 30 years ago.

Joining eight others, I boarded a bus from San Antonio to Dallas, looking forward to a quiet trip. As we left the city limits, I glanced at the person seated across the aisle from me; she had knelt on the floor of the bus, with her head in her hands, praying.

I suddenly closed my eyes, hoping she wouldn't ask me to talk. As the trip progressed, she began to visit each passenger, asking each in a preacher's voice, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus?"

As the hours passed, she went from person to person, pausing after each one to return to her seat and sitting quietly until she chose the next person.

I pretended to be asleep and tried to avoid looking at her. After a few hours of riding, she caught my eye and asked if she could join me. I welcomed her to the seat next to me, and she asked, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus?"

I can remember my answer as if it were yesterday, "Yes," I said firmly. "Jesus is my way, my truth and my life, and I couldn't live without him!"

She got up without a word, returned to her seat, knelt on the floor, head in her hands, and never spoke to me again.

Remembering this story prompted me to write this article. The unnamed evangelist on that Greyhound bus prompted me to articulate my faith and stirred something deep within me. My deep love for Christ is so central to my life that sometimes I need to tell the story to remind me of who I am.

At different times in my struggle with the hierarchical/patriarchal church, especially with its interpretation of Jesus' role with women, I remember my response to the "Greyhound evangelist" and listen to Christ evolving in my heart.

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I consider myself a "Teilhardian Catholic in the spirit of *Laudato Si*'," as Mary Evelyn Tucker expressed it. With this as my context, I have reaffirmed my desire to follow Jesus in a church I love and have wept over.

My journey as a "Teilhardian Catholic" living in the spirit of *Laudato Si*' began in 1968 when our Jesuit chaplain introduced a few of us to the writings of Teilhard de Chardin, a French Jesuit. As we met with him, he made it very clear that the mimeographed copies of Teilhard's writings, banned by the Vatican, could not be shared, and we would return them after each session.

I had little idea of evolutionary concepts at the time, and these sessions opened my mind to new possibilities.

I didn't understand much of what was being explained, only that my heart was energized by each meeting. I felt like I was encountering the risen Christ, the One I had loved deeply but kept confined to the pages of Scripture.

Shortly after these sessions ended, I received a call from my community leadership to establish a center for spiritual development, where I was introduced to directed retreats, again through Jesuits at St. Louis University.

Our community offered ways to enter the silence of reading the word of God, as if Christ was speaking to one directly. These retreats often led to a renewed desire to follow Christ in one's ministry/life, to make hard decisions and to find deep inner peace and the energy to take faith seriously.

Simultaneously, we expressed our newfound faith by delving deeper into the principles of Catholic social justice, leading some to volunteer for foreign missions, take on ministries that worked for systemic change, and even risk imprisonment.

The context of those years (1968 to the present) was a desire to follow the Christ I had encountered in the pages of Scripture, the writings of the mystics, and the new science that explored the wonders of a universe, more vast than I could imagine.

> My heart had been transformed into knowing just enough science to live in awe of creation. Telling this story reminds me of who I am.
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With a ministry that allowed me to travel internationally, I met others whose culture and faith tradition led them to see the sacredness in all creation, especially the Buddhist culture of our sisters in Japan, or those working with Indigenous peoples in Honduras, or serving Native Americans. We are all part of the sacred web of life. At the same time, I met sisters who had translated the principles of Teilhard and others into initiatives such as community gardens, divestment from fossil fuels, and so much more.

Certainly, Teilhard's life gave me an image of a faithful Catholic, a Jesuit priest, who explored the world of science and brought a worldview of evolution where there had been certitude, challenging me to open my mind and heart to new possibilities.

Broadening an understanding of Teilhard's insights, and following the teachings of Passionist Fr. Thomas Berry, and his faithful students Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, led to offering "Universe Story Retreats" that nourished a hunger for deeper spirituality.

Throughout this journey of faith, I feared I was losing Jesus, who was truly "my way, my truth and my life." However, trusting the energy of the adventure, I encountered the Holy Spirit "renewing the face of the Earth," teaching us how to live sustainably with the fragile and billions of years of development found in soil, sea and stars. My heart had been transformed into knowing just enough science to live in awe of creation. Telling this story reminds me of who I am.

In 2015, when Pope Francis issued *Laudato Si'*, his encyclical letter calling for a profound moral shift to "care for our common home," I was eager to follow. I believe it is good people, the wisdom in Catholicism and other religious traditions that will help us meet the challenges we face today.

I truly believe in the words of Teilhard: "Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then for a second time in the history of the world, we will have discovered fire."

Often, I need to remember the "story" represented here. I fear if I forget, I will lose confidence in the risen Christ who has given me life and promises to guide me, no matter what the future brings. May you, dear reader, be encouraged to remember your story as well.