

## Lenten Reflection

Ash Wednesday, February 10, 2016

*By Pat Montgomery, Director of Associates*



As a child, I was happy to learn that the ashes the priest put on my forehead on Ash Wednesday came from burning the palms left over from the previous Palm Sunday. This elevated the dark mark I gladly sported all day into a holier realm than just a smear of dirt. Years later, in June 2008 to be exact, I learned that the dust of which we are all made is actually stardust. We are made of the same stuff used to create the whole universe. We belong to the whole.

Brian Swimme, a mathematician, philosopher, and cosmologist, addressed the 2008 gathering of Sisters and Associates at the Women of Providence in Collaboration (WPC) Event in Terre Haute, Indiana. He said, "All of the elements of our body, every one of them, were forged out of a star."

"When we deepen our awareness of the simple truth that we are here through the creativity of the stars, we begin to feel fresh gratitude. When we reflect ... reverence naturally wells up within us. Then, in the deepest regions of our hearts, we begin to embrace our own creativity. What we bestow on the world allows others to live in joy."

Brian Swimme, [The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos](http://theconversation.org/archive/swimme) and <http://theconversation.org/archive/swimme>

Franciscan nun and scientist, Sr. Ilia Delio addressed the WPC Providence Event just last June. She too spoke of our cosmic origins: "We emerge out of this long, cosmic process we call evolution... (which is all about)... deep relationality. We are created for love, and that's what keeps pulling us onward."

Here I stand today with the dust of stars on this forehead, itself fashioned from the same hydrogen, helium, nitrogen, oxygen, carbon, and iron, which comprise everything else in this universe. I aim to focus in this sacred season on establishing and maintaining deep and right relationships with all others in my communities: my family, friends, the Sisters of Divine Providence, and the Associates. I hope to consciously feel that gravitational force of Love.