

“The Cosmic Soul: People of the Great Work”
Psalm 139:13-16

Take a deep breath. Imagine you are standing in a place where the city lights cannot reach. Look up. Remember a moment when you looked at the night sky and felt that sudden, sharp intake of breath—that sense of awe and wonder. [Let's take a moment to look together at the scale of what we inhabit: https://youtu.be/t8GfpNo-sSQ.](https://youtu.be/t8GfpNo-sSQ)

When we glimpse the vastness of the universe, something holy happens: it resets our orientation. We realize that the lens through which we usually view our lives is far too small. Beholding the stars reminds us of a liberating truth: **You are not your job description.** You are not your bank balance or your social media notifications. You are not the number on the scale, the car in your driveway, or even your social status. You are a participant in an amazing whole - a universe 14 billion years in the making. You are a character in a great love story unfolding through the creative genius of a Creator who is, quite simply, in love with the stars.

Why is this "cosmic soul" perspective necessary? Because without it, we suffer. James Conlon suggests that we are currently living in a "culture without vocation." We have lost our sense of deep purpose. Young people feel the weight of an uncertain future; the economy forces many into work that feels soulless; and advertising tells us that our only "destiny" is immediate gratification. In this era of turbulence, alienation abounds. We feel disconnected from the Earth, from our families, and from our very selves. When we live only for the "small self"—the ego that craves control, security, and esteem—we become exhausted.

But when our life is re-oriented toward the **Great Work**—the unfolding of God's love in the cosmos - we move with a different kind of grace. We stop trying to *manage* the universe and start *participating* in it.

This is the ancient wisdom of Psalm 139. Let us listen:

“For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb... my frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, **intricately woven in the depths of the earth.**”

Notice that phrase: *"woven in the depths of the earth."* This isn't just poetic; it's cosmic. Science tells us that the iron in our blood and the calcium in our bones were forged in the heart of dying stars billions of years ago. We were literally "woven in the depths" of the universe's history.

To be alive is a statistical impossibility. As Bill Bryson notes in *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, for you to be here, trillions of drifting atoms had to somehow assemble themselves in an intricate, unique way—and then they have to maintain that shape for

The few decades that constitute your life. It is a miracle that defies imagination:
https://youtu.be/ozSx2_Z8hD4

This leads us to the vision of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit priest and paleontologist who wrote about the "**Cosmic Liturgy**." Teilhard once found himself in the Ordos Desert in China. He wanted to celebrate Mass, but he had no bread, no wine, and no altar. Instead, he looked out at the horizon and realized that the entire Earth was the altar. He wrote a famous prayer called "*The Mass on the World*," suggesting that the "Great Work" of God is the spiritualization of all matter. Teilhard believed that the universe is not just a backdrop for our lives; it is a "divine milieu." Every atom, every rock, and every heartbeat is part of a "Cosmic Liturgy." When we work, when we love, when we suffer, we are offering up the "matter" of our lives to be transformed into "prayer." Our vocation is to be the conscious part of the universe that says "Thank You." We are the eyes through which the cosmos beholds its Creator.

Richard Rohr reminds us that once we have this "initiating experience" of the cosmic, we realize: *Life is not about us, but we are about life*. This is an earthquake in the brain! We have been substituting the part for the whole. Understanding that our lives are not "about us" is the connection point with everything else. It takes an enormous weight off our backs. You don't have to figure it all out. You don't have to be God. You just have to **participate**.

Jesus said, "*Seek first the kingdom of God... and all these things will be given to you.*" (Matthew 6:33). He was speaking to anxious people worried about their "small lives." He was saying: "Look at the lilies. Look at the birds. Look at the Creator's scope. Align yourself with the Great Work, and your anxiety will find its proper place."

So, how do we stay in this alignment? How do we remember that we are "People of the Great Work"?

It begins by recognizing that the "Mass on the World" doesn't require a cathedral. As Teilhard de Chardin realized in the desert, your "altar" is your kitchen table, your workbench, your hospital bedside, or wherever you find yourself. When you offer your daily labor and life—no matter how mundane—as a gift to the unfolding of love, **matter becomes prayer**.

You are the universe finally waking up. You are the part of the Great Work that has been given a voice to sing, hands to heal, and a soul to love. When you feel small, when you feel like your life is just a series of chores and bills, remember that you are a **Cosmic Necessity**. Without you, the universe would be missing the specific way *you* reflect God's light and help the Great Love unfold. Amen.