Monique introduced Brother Philip Pinto: “So welcome everyone to this second out of four webinars with Brother Philip Pinto. Briefly I will review the instructions of the webinar and then we will begin. For this time, we added Portuguese translation, hopefully this will work well. so please choose your language: there is a button on your screen. Our interpreters are: Daniella, for Spanish; Julie, for French; and Vivian will be with us shortly, for Portuguese; Mariella, for Italian; and I would like to mention that as for the Italian you need to click on the Russian flag”.

Brother Philips' presentation will last about 45 minutes, and the remaining time will be for Questions. To submit a question, please write it in the chat box. By writing your question you help the interpreters to translate it easily. So please do not use the Q A sections. After hearing the response of your question if you want to discuss it further, you can raise your hand and I will unmute your mic.

The webinar will be recorded and posted on the website as soon as possible in five languages. So now I turn over you Brother Philip. Thank you so much. Most welcome”.

A new story

Philip: “Greetings to all of you from Chandigarh in India. Thanks for coming back to this second session. Again I want to remind you that I'm sharing thoughts on the implications of a formation, based on today's world and our emerging spirituality. And I'm going to take up from where I finished last week. I'm grateful for the questions that were sent in. I got a copy of all the questions. Grateful for that: it helped me to see where you were and I will address some of these questions today. I want to remind you that the wisdom doesn't come here from me. The wisdom is with you, particularly, when you gather in community. That's where wisdom resides. The old saying that where two or three gather, in my name, there I am, is very, very true. And my encouragement to you is that when we finish this evening the work only begins, and you take it up and you seek clarification and you seek depth in it, going deeper when you are in your communities. More and more you have to turn to one another, and share the secrets of our heart, as Cardinal Newman used to say.

My thoughts today are going to be on this New Story, and even though we call it “a New Story”, it started when time began. I am only going to be able to point out some of the implications of this story. I'm not going to go into the science of it. This picture that you are seeing on the screen is taken by the Hubble telescope. This year is the 30th anniversary of the Hubble Telescope, the time when it was launched, and
it sent back amazing pictures of our universe. For the first time we are seeing our universe in a way that we never even imagined it. I remember 30 years back, when the first pictures started coming in. It was amazing. The Important thing to remember is that the universe has always existed. But we for the first time had the eyes to see it. The telescope was our lens. And there is so much happening in our world today. We are getting the eyes to see what is really going on. We cannot pretend that this universe does not exist. Once new knowledge comes to us our attitudes change, otherwise we are living in denial. So, I am inviting you to open your hearts, open your minds to the new. Don't be afraid of it. Embrace it. This is the Spirit speaking to us. I want to start, instead of a prayer, with a video. Some of you would have seen it, but it is important to us to look at it again as it is only four and a half minutes. It's very interesting and I think very beautiful. (The video was from Holland's Got Talent and the five years old child singing). What did you feel as you watched that? When you see an incredible talent like that, what is it saying to you? Just stay with how are you feeling. I will be coming back to this in a moment or two. What you have just been watching is the key to understanding ourselves, key to understanding our universe and key to understanding God.

This is a quotation from your formation document. It's speaking about us today. It is telling us that for the first time science is not an enemy of religion. It is not seen as an enemy, but science and religion together are giving us an understanding of our world that we have never had before.

We get Paul's words from Romans. “From the beginning till now creation has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all of us are giving birth to something”. That's what makes us generative. That's what makes our lives worth living. Creation is not static. It wasn't something done in six days and God resting. Creation is ongoing. We are living in an evolving universe. There's a dynamic relationship between God and the Universe. And our understanding of God is evolving. This is something crucial for us. We are getting an understanding of God something that people before have never had and yet this understanding of God was known to the mystics. Mystics knew how to enter into this secret of who God is. Mystics see the connections. I think one of the great regrets I have in my life is that I began to look at the mysteries far too late. Had I gone to the mystics in the beginning I believe that my relationship with God would have been much, much richer. A couple of weeks ago a cousin of mine sent me a link to the Bolshoi ballet performing, so that I was able to see “Swan Lake”, and it was marvelous. I remember going in that link and sitting down for a couple of hours and watching this performance. And as I was watching it I was saying to myself that I was lost in wonder, just as I was lost in wonder again a few moments ago watching that young child, singing with such a mature voice and so much feeling. And the wonder was this. I don't know the process, but billions of years ago atoms were formed and those atoms transformed from one to another and to another, until they formed a person like Tchaikovsky, and then they formed into the music, and then they came along into these graceful dancers, who were able to transform that music into dance. And those atoms transformed into you and into me. And I was watching Bolshoi ballet with so much appreciation, wonder, and gratitude, and I said to myself that the only way this universe can express wonder is through human beings. I do not know of any other form of living being, able to combine appreciation and gratitude, reverence. It needs to be self-aware of conscious species and that's what it is
happening over here now. So, I asked myself: “Are we humans because of the nature of our conscious awareness, able to give that expression on behalf of the universe? And I see these two pictures here. On the right is a star. It could easily have been planet Earth before it cooled down. It was molten rock. And then those atoms, over a couple of billion years transformed and transformed till they became to the picture on the left. And I think of the words of Brian Swimme: “What starts off as molten rock now sings opera!”.

What does it mean to be human in an evolving universe? And I think of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus who had an extraordinary understanding of the universe, he had no science, he didn't have the signs about all this, he didn't have the historic, the scientific facts, that we have today, and because he was a man of spirit he could see his connection to creation, and he was constantly reminding us of how God was all the time in our universe. God is a ground of our being and Jesus was trying to say to the people around him: “This God that you are in a relationship with, this God totally envelops you, you're never separated from this God” and he wanted to show us that, that we're never separated from this God. He says: “This is what it is to be human”. You give not only the universe a chance of expressing itself, you give not only God a chance of expressing himself. And I'm going to say a little more about that in a moment.

To be human is really to express wonder, knowing that I'm the universe expressing wonder, and through me the universe expresses wonder, appreciation, and gratitude. Then what could we say about God? How do I express God? I make the mystery of God visible. One has only to look at the life of Jesus to see that. The sad thing is that we stop at Jesus when we say that Jesus makes God visible. That is the task of every creature: to make God visible. Master Eckhart said that we are God's seed and God seed must grow into God. Julian of Norwich (we celebrated her feast last week) has this most beautiful sentence: she said: “Not only are we made by God, we are made of God”. My sisters and friends we are made of God. God's energy and God's wisdom, God's compassion and God's creativity, God's forgiveness, and God's love of it in me. And my task as a human being, is to make that God visible. I am going to keep coming back to that, because to me, this is what the universe story is telling us. This God is not separate. This God can never be separate and we are now going to look at some of these implications too. I am just going to give you a little moment of reflection.

The last time that we spoke about the three Rs: Resonance, Resistance and Realignmeent, you might remember that from the last time. And some of you asked me to explain that a little further. Well. I am going to ask you just take a moment: “What are you hearing that you agree with? Have I said certain things, that perhaps you agree with?” Take a moment, just to write that down, a word or a phrase. “What is disturbing me? Why is it disturbing me?” Take a moment to write that down.

Is it the most important thing? Because we really are creatures that do not like change and are going to be challenged to change. Is it there anything that you've heard that is challenging you to change the way you act and believe? Very quickly let’s write down a phrase and if there is nothing yet, that's fine.
This is the world we are living behind. When you see the picture over there, the waters above the firmament, the firmament over there and the underworld. So we have these three: Earth, Heaven and the Underworld., and all around this there is water: waters above and waters below. In the Biblical language water, the seas, the great deep, is always meaning chaos. Now, we might have given up that sort of thinking years and years ago, but that thinking still dictates religious belief patterns. The Bible is full of it. This earth, that the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in there. Do you remember that: “You made the Heavens and the highest Heavens and the earth and all that is beyond it, the seas and all that is in them”. So, that forms the way we saw it. It’s Our Father who is in Heaven.

That's why we picture God up there. Not very briefly is the three-tiered universe: Earth, Heaven and the underworld. Implicit in that is a God out there. You see right up on top: God, Heaven of Heavens. One thing that I'm going to say something to you that I hope you will remember: God is not out there. That is at the heart of this new story: God is not far away. Our planet Earth is the center. It's seen as that. We know today that Earth is a tiny dot in a huge Universe, and even though we give it so much importance and see it as the centre and the human is so important, we've got to remember that it is not the centre and if this little dot ceased to exist the rest of the universe would continue. We need huge humility arising out of this universe story, to recognize our place in it. And this story also told us that the human is the crown of creation.

Today, we discover that we are the latest comers on the scene. And we're not the end. We are evolving. Creation, as it evolves, we'll go into another phase and we will give place to the next species and other species. And it's important for us to remember that. Look at the shifts that come from this new story. By the way, I should also say that the institutional Church, around the fourth century, really took on the three-tiered universe.

And let’s talk about God that was far away and is so different from the God of Jesus of Nazareth. All the stories of Jesus tell us of a God who is around us, who was there with us, and is constantly asking us: “Can you not see God around you?” We lost that, and we moved further and further and further away from God as a result. And in the fourth century when we took on the culture of empire with Constantine we also took on the power and the hierarchy that comes with power. So we put God far away from us and we said we were separated from God. And the Church said: “Don’t worry, we will be able to mediate between you and God”. And Jesus said that we don’t need a mediator. God is so close that there is nothing that may come between. But we have not believed that. And that is the tragedy of our life. Jesus reveals the Divine is ever present. That is what He's all the time telling us and that’s what I was trying to say to you. I know right in the beginning, I was taught that from the Catechism when I was a boy, that Jesus embodies the divine presence in human form. We knew that. You have been teaching that. And as I said, the tragedy is that we stopped at Jesus. When Jesus talked about himself being so close to the Father: “To have seen me is to have seen the Father, because the Father and I are one”. He said this not because he was special, but because he was human and you can say that and I can say that. “To have seen me is to have seen the Father, because my task is to make God visible”. “The disciples, when they looked at Jesus”, says Marcus Burg, “They saw what a life full of God looks like”. Well, you and I must try to do that. Now,
let us be honest. There are sections of our lives that are full of God but there are also sections in our life that are empty of God. That what’s formation is about. I am not living in exile from God. That's what formation is about. I'm not separated from God and of course that brings in the whole question of the original sin. The Church teaching us that we were born in the original sin. Jesus says that nothing separates you from God. But I'm asking you today to look at it. And I will add something else in a moment.

The Kingdom of God: this is something that Jesus talked about, this is central to Jesus. It is not a grace. It's a new consciousness, it’s a new way of seeing life. When I look at these three things over here we need to see what Jesus is telling me and God is concerned with this world. If you want to discover God you have to discover God in this world. I am stressing all this now because when we come to look at your document on formation, this is the context in from which you have to work. When you look at your whole formation, this is what you are looking at: the holistic formation, participatory formation, it’s because of this. It’s the divine Presence in this world, about me living the best possible human expression to this presence in my life, I give the best possible human expression to God's presence. Think about it. There are aspects of God that are visible to all of you and that is why we are here for. It's about seeing differently. So, Jesus is not telling me that I've got to win a place in heaven. It's not about winning forgiveness from God, that is withholding forgiveness for some reason, is that we really see the creative presence of God all around us. That's what Jesus is saying: “Look at the parables”. (Luke 4: 18-19)

You are aware of this Jesus coming into the synagogue, and taking the scroll going to the place in Isaiah and reading the text. “The Spirit of the Lord has come upon me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives, give sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free, proclaim the Lord’s year of favor”. You see these, I have broken them up into these five over here, and I put it in the form of an axis, which is the Greek letter k. It's a kind of a technique that the biblical writers use so much so that if you look at the number 1 and at the number 5 they are the same: The Lord’s good news, proclaiming the Lord’s year of favor, that was Jubilee. Restoration of property. It’s good news to the poor. Numbers 2 and 4 are the same: liberty to captives, let the oppressed go free. And all this is so that our attention is focused on the central one: “Giving new sight to the blind”. And if we go to Isaiah, from which this is taken, it is to highlight the centrality of this, this is at the heart of Jesus message: giving a new sight to the blind. “I wanted you to see differently”-said Jesus.

Here's something that I would ask you to remember: Jesus did not come to give us a new religion. If someone says otherwise, they are either making a mistake or telling a lie. Jesus came to tell us that life could be lived differently, that human values could be different, that human relationships could be different. “If -says Jesus- you can believe that you are surrounded by God, then these three things will happen, that all around you is God. If you believe that you are made of God, then you’re going to live your life differently”. That is all that Jesus asks us to do, he wants us to live differently. Don't live according to the dominant culture. That's Caesar’s kingdom. Live according to God’s culture. So, if the kingdom of God is life, then God would be in charge, not Caesar. How different things would be then. Who would be really important? How would wealth be shared? Ask those questions to yourself: how do we treat the planet, Mother Earth? This is saying the same thing to you sisters and friends, this is right in the beginning of Mark’s Gospel. When John
was arrested, Jesus said that God’s kingdom is among you. He doesn’t say that it’s going to come, no, he says that it is here. And he asks: “Repent and believe”. Unfortunately, the translation is poor. The Greek word is “metanoia”. Metanoia is not “repent”. Metanoia is: “change the way you think”. That is what I’ve been saying up to know: change the way you think about God. When you do that, then you will believe the good news. You cannot believe the good news without changing the way you think. I usually ask a question: “What is the good news?” It is right at the beginning of Mark’s Gospel. He says: “Repent, change the way you think and believe the good news” and the good news is that nothing will separate you from God. Can you imagine a love like that?

You want to look at your own formation, at your own growth and at your own development. You and I have to change every day, because God is constantly revealing God’s self. Are we growing in that understanding? The more we discover about God and the thirstier we become. Charles Darwin had said that very interesting sentence: “It is not the strongest, nor the most intelligent species that survive, but the one most responsive to change”. This is a mantra that I use: “Nothing is so sacred it cannot be questioned”. You want to come on this journey? You have to challenge, you have to question all the things that you held most sacred. Because in this new paradigm, all will be seen differently. It is not disloyalty. This is fidelity. You and I are here to keep alive the dangerous memory of Jesus. I am going to invite you, again, to take a couple of moments of reflection on how our religious formation, our religious conditioning has locked us into a world so small, so when Jesus comes along and tries to save us, He wants to save us from this rigid thinking. That’s what he wants to do. I’m going to invite you (I know we are running out of time, in fact I probably ran out of time already) I want you to really look at this. Look at it honestly and openly. Which believes do you have at the moment that are locking you up?

There’s one more little section that will take me about five minutes. If you bear with me, please, I think I would like to do that. Twenty years ago Brother Frank Andersen told us this mantra: “The wind will blow anywhere it will”. We do not know where the wind will blow. He taught us that. And in the midst of our discussions and debates and so on, every now and again, he would get us to stop and sing that mantra, trying to tell us that this is how God catches our attention. It comes from John’s Gospel, chapter 3, where Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus. And he tells us: “You don’t know where the wind is going to come from but you know it is there, you feel its effect”. But the wind is free. You can’t control it. We may try to control God when we try to control people’s understanding of God. They will never succeed. This is an image for the presence of God. And you see that image in the Old Testament, that’s fine, it’s there the Ruah of God, the breath of God. That’s what this is. Just be aware of it. It speaks about the mystery of God, the life of God, the transcendence of God. I want to say one thing about this and I’m going to take the story that has been in the news recently. Jesus calming the storm, very up to our times. I’m taking Matthew, portrayal of it. You know, the story. In the storm they see Jesus “Lord, If it is really you- says Peter - let me come across the water”. And Jesus says “come”. So, what does Peter do? He steps out of the boat into the water. A few moments ago I spoke about the water: sign of chaos, something you are afraid of. But he was not scared of the water. Then he noticed the strong wind that he started to be afraid. The Gospel writer says that it’s the presence of God that fills us with fear. I want you to remember that. The question is as you look at the wind in your life, where does the wind blow? Very simple:
in our hearts. That's where the wind blows. And the most dangerous thing we can do is to descend to the stillness of our hearts. The crisis in our world today, is that we are not doing that. That's why we are in crisis. We're not spending time listening to our hearts. We're not ready to go into that stillness there. Jesus tells us that when you pray go into a room, lock the door. The one who resides in secret will speak to you. My sisters and friends, this is prayer: going in there and being in there with the One who has taken our lives. And in that silence listen. He doesn't say when you're going to that room talk. No. The One who resides will speak to you. You listen. We don't do enough of that. We want quick answers. We do not have the patience to stay in the mystery to allow the wind blowing in our hearts. The reason we do not do that is that we are afraid of what we may be asked to do. Bring to our spirituality a posture of listening, listening to the oneness of our universe, placing ourselves close to the heart of the earth and the heart of the human soul. Really listen to it. You will pick up the deep yearning that is inside of you, the yearning for more of God thank I currently have, the yearning for communion, the yearning for oneness.

I'm going to close; I am going to the last slide. I'm sorry. It's the mystics that will tell us of this, the mystics of all religions: Juliana of Norwich, Teilhard de Chardin, Saint Teresa of Avila, Rumi, Mirabai. These are all the mystics. Just get a snippet of their writings and you'll see the longing they speak about, and their realization that nothing separates them from God.

In finishing all this, I'm sorry. I want to leave you with these questions.

What do you think is a central feature of the New Story, with reference to the God that it reveals? How do you see the life and mission of Jesus in the New Story? And what is my call as a human being in the New Story? Try, as we said the last time, to hold the balance, how does it find expression in my heart and in my behavior? This my sisters and friends is a call to change the culture of our congregation. This is what it means to change the culture of a congregation. So, I'm sorry, I've gone well over my time. And I'm going to have a look at some of the questions.

**Question and Answer Session Began here:**
Monique indicated that she had three questions.

First question: Please share an example of rigid thinking.

Another question: How can we rephrase the sentence of Saint John Eudes: “A soul is worth a thousand worlds”?

Brother's response to the question about John Eudes.
You're going to come across a lot of material, not only from your Founders but from other writers, from the Gospel and many may think that they are responses to the new story. I think that when you're coming from one way of thinking into another way of thinking, also, what people say, for example, John Eudes, you know the whole idea of a soul. Don't take that as a literal piece over there. Take it as an expression of his Zeal, of his thirst for ministry and mission. I believe that John would have been at one level somehow horrified,
if I said: “Do not worry about going to Heaven”. What you have to worry about is how much of God to you want to experience? Because that is what you are going to be with. And the more of God that you can accept, and be at home with, the more of God you will discover. All we can look at is what Jesus told us.

How many among us take seriously into consideration the Parable of the prodigal son? You know, the only way to look at it and we know that the only way that Jesus was to experience God, His understanding of God, was really to tell stories about it: “God is like this. God is like that”, and in that parable there is not mention at all about the Father's side reproach of it. He doesn't even look at the sin. He is just interested in the son: his son is back. He is just interested in that. Says: “God was drunk last night. Yet he drunk too much wine and he said a great secret. God said -I wanted to tell you a secret- he says -There is no such thing, no such thing as sin”. Now you and I know there is sin. Look around our world. But what is mystic saying? The prodigal son's father is saying: “When I see you I don't see sin. I see my son. I see my daughter”. One of the hardest things for us is to be able to accept that.

An example of rigid thinking? When I was in Rome, there was a lady that did all the cooking for us. Her husband announced her that he was going to divorce her, because he had met someone else, after 35 years of marriage. She mentioned it to a parish priest that did not want to give her the Holy Communion. This is rigid thinking, when you put the law above the human need. Divorced cannot receive communion. The law becomes everything. Now here there is a misunderstanding, we need laws of course, and you always temper the law, but they have to be adjusted to human situations, with exceptions with the human situation.

We have to challenge Church. Pope Francis is telling us this and how we have to do this. He is always saying that one has to pray. There is no need to say Our Father in Heaven or Ave Maria. Challenge your Parish, your Church with the things that he is doing and saying about the Church for the poor, the field hospital, the clericalism.

He said that not only priests are clerical, but it is us to be clerical each time we are having this rigid thinking. And he says: “I know some of you are having trouble with the Vatican, the Roman Curia. It is alright. They'll come and say things to you. Listen to them, but live your own lives”.

We need to change our culture of the Congregation. I would say that one of the first things to do at the Province level, at the congregational level, is to look at what are the dominant features of your culture. How can we face this from the beginning? How can we change the culture? I asked my team many years ago. Let's give it a name, let's name this. We call ourselves brothers, but we are very hierarchical, we are very patriarchal. We are hard, we are rigid and we say we have to be the men. I remember a brother when I was a postulant. I cried because I fell down and he told me: “Christian brothers don't cry”. Therefore, we want to change this and we started a spiritual program. We called it: “The heart of being Brother”. How to be a brother with the heart because it is about going down to our heart and staying there. And we invited them to form communities like that. It was a wonderful journey.
Next question: How to balance our rigid thinking ant the reality that we are living every day?

Brother: It's a bit like the other one. I believe that the balance is a gift. Am I able to go to this space inside of me, many times? This is what is going to give me the balance. Another thing that will help is conversations with my Community, but the conversations should be generative: it's the ability to Listen to the other. When I can enter the other person’s point of view then the rigidity melts inside of me. So: it’s a double thing that I am saying. I can only tell you what works for me, what helps me. My initial reaction is that this has to be done, and that has to be done, that is the rule, but when I go into my space I am able to see things differently, so that I can get some sort of a balance, understanding where the other person is coming from is a huge help.

The next question is on dualism. What is dualism?
Dualism is seeing myself as separate. This is in the simplest form. I am separated from you. Jesus tells us: “Love your neighbor as yourself”. He does not say: “Love your neighbor as you love yourself”. Your neighbor is you. That is the ability to see no difference. These things are not going to come easily. This is part of the spiritual journey.

The next question: We do not need a mediator, but in our present Church ritualism is strong.

Brother: I will only speak of my own experience. Our Church, Theology and thinking has made a God separated from us. It is also said that we need Jesus to be a Mediator between ourselves and an angry God. This theology had its full expression around the XIth century, but in the first thousand years it was not expressed in that way. Therefore, I think that our Church needs to go back now and rediscover its roots. The Vatican II says that we have to go back to the Jesus of the Gospels and to our congregational traditions. This is true, but the Vatican III is to come along, which will have to have a lot of women, will also see the Jesus of the Gospel, traditions of the congregation and the Universe Story. Nothing can be done today without this history. And that story takes away our understanding of the original sin. It does not come from Jesus teaching. That original sin came around the fourth century. Let's go back to what you said. The Catholic Church is going to do something that will make this new history difficult. I am saying that with deep respect, because one has to be blind not to see the extraordinary beauty of our traditions, the richness of our traditions and the wonderful people who have found health within that traditions, and that was wonderful to them, but for that time. Once you get a new knowledge, you cannot pretend that you do not have that new knowledge. That's why we have to challenge everything. Nothing is so sacred that it cannot be questioned. We must do it with respect. I always remind to myself that, the heart of Jesus' teaching is non-violence. Therefore, if we are violent with the Church, with the hierarchy, we are not Jesus' people.

Our next question is: Is our task to move from God, that is unchanging, to a God that is evolving?
Brother: Yes, of course it is. I will put in this way to you. I would hesitate to say that God is evolving, but our world is evolving and, therefore, if the presence of God permeates all of this, all of creation, then you and I allow new expressions of God to be born. New gifts will come along, that have not be brought because we have not reached a certain stage yet.

I thank you. I would like to thank translators.

Sister Josita: So, thank you very much, brother, for the thought provoking and inspiring input. We have been really challenged by you.
Sisters and friends as we come to a close of this second session, I invite you to just take a moment of silence. Try to identify a word or a phrase or a thought that stays with you from this conversation. What do you wish to take with you as you move out from this conversation?

Let us take time to deepen our reflection, sisters and friends. I invite you to take time in our community or with your circle of friends to share with each other what has moved you and the invitation it is for us personally and collectively. There was one question about the congregational culture. So, I invite you as communities to reflect as we move into the ICAs and Chapter, it is a wonderful moment to challenge ourselves. So let us continue to deepen our reflection today. Thanks to each one of you for joining us. And we hope that you will join us at our third session, which will be on the 26th. So, Monique will end the session, thank you so much.

Monique: Thank you so much Josita. So, on behalf of the 395, I will not say persons, I will say devices because we cannot see who is behind the screen, because they are more than 395 people on today’s webinar, I would like to thank you, Brother, for your inspiring presentation and for giving us much to think about and discuss as a community. Thank you so much. We look forward to our next session on the 26th of May.

Thank you so much for your presentation and for your presence dear sisters and friends. God bless you and goodbye.