

# THOMAS BERRY

## And the Great Work

Thomas Berry is the father of the Ecozoic Era, a global prophet, and an Earth saint. Thomas was born in Greensboro, North Carolina in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He entered a Catholic monastery at an early age and dedicated his life to study, reflection and teaching. Thomas founded the History of Religions Program at Fordham University and the Riverdale Center of Religious Research. He has served as the president of the American Teilhard de Chardin Association.

### Key Writings

Thomas Berry has written four books of special importance to envisioning and understanding the Ecozoic Era. *The Great Work* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999) – This challenging presentation outlines the major issues facing human society at the close of the Cenozoic Era. It points out aspects of the major institutions – the universities, the churches, the governments and the corporations – that require new operating principles to foster a creative relationship between the natural world and the human world as the Universe enters the Ecozoic Era. *Evening Thoughts* (2006) includes a series of essays detailing specific insights for moving into the Ecozoic Era. *The Universe Story* (co-authored with Brian Swimme) (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992) – From the Primal Flaring Forth, across 15-billion years of time to the emergence of the Ecozoic Era, *The Universe Story* narrates the unfolding transitions of the Universe as we know it today. By combining the best of modern science with the depth wisdom of contemporary society, the authors weave an inspiring narrative of the creative process that permeates all aspects of the natural and human worlds. *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988) – this series of essays begins the process of looking at life and the Universe we live in from new perspectives.

### Historical Analysis

In *The Great Work*, Thomas Berry has made two observations about history that serve as guides for those concerned with shaping the directions of society in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:

- The “central flaw” in human development is our “mode of consciousness that has established a radical discontinuity between the human and other modes of being and [has bestowed] all rights on the humans” and
- “[t]he historical mission of our times is to reinvent the human—at the species level, with critical reflection, within the community of life systems, in a time-developmental context, by means of story and shared dream experience.”

### The Great Work

Thomas wrote: We are about the Great Work. We all have our particular work – some of us are teachers, some of us are healers, some of us in various professions, some of us are farming. We have a variety of occupations. But beside the particular work we do and the particular lives we lead, we have a Great Work that everyone is involved in and no one is exempt from. That is the work of moving on from a terminal Cenozoic to an emerging Ecozoic Era in the story of the planet...which is the Great Work.