



# Sunflower Seeds

Celebrating Everyday Spirituality



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## Happy 25th Birthday, Hubble Telescope!

by MELANNIE SVOBODA SND on APRIL 27, 2015

On April 24, 1990 the Hubble Telescope was launched into orbit by NASA aboard the space shuttle Discovery. Named after Edwin Hubble (a renowned American astronomer), this amazing telescope has transformed what we know about outer space. Since it began orbiting the earth, it has continuously sent back pictures of our universe that can only be described as awesome!

First a few facts. The Hubble Telescope is over 43 feet (13 m.) long, about the size of a large school bus. It weighs 24,500 pounds (11,110 kg.) or the weight of two full-grown elephants. Hubble is able to take such clear pictures because it orbits at an altitude of 343 miles which is beyond our atmosphere. Hubble is fast too, speeding along at 17,500 miles per hour. This means it orbits the earth every 97 minutes.

## About Sister Melannie Svoboda, SND

Sister of Notre Dame,  
teacher, student, author,  
speaker, listener, friend,  
poet, farm girl.



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*The Hubble Telescope.*

Hubble is powered by the sun using two 25 foot solar panels. It operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Each week Hubble transmits 120 gigabytes of scientific data back to earth. That's equivalent to 3,600 feet of books on a very long library shelf! When Hubble was first launched, its creators were dismayed to learn that its main mirror was defective. Hence, the images it was sending back were blurred. This problem was corrected in 1993 when astronauts from the space shuttle Endeavor successfully performed a service mission to the telescope. Since then four subsequent space shuttle missions have repaired or upgraded the telescope.



Hubble is not cheap. It cost 1.5 billion dollars to build and launch. The cost to maintain Hubble is 100 times greater than ground-based telescopes. But Hubble is in continuous use. Strictly speaking, anyone can apply for time to use Hubble, but most users are from the scientific community. Thousands of proposals to use Hubble are received each year from all over the world. A special board decides who gets to use the telescope. Only about 1/5th of the requests are able to be

## About Sunflower Seeds

Each Monday I'll post a short reflection, a simple musing on some aspect of spirituality– the everyday kind of spirituality that includes things like walking in the park, slicing an onion for the casserole, caring for a child, studying for an exam, reading a line from scripture, laughing at a joke, or mourning a significant loss.



Along the way I welcome your questions, comments and insights too. After all, we're all in this life–this spiritual life–together!

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What has Hubble accomplished? It has helped us determine more accurately the age of the universe (between 13 and 14 billion years old.) It has also identified quasars and the existence of so-called black energy. It has informed us that the universe is expanding faster than previously thought. It is bigger than we thought too. There are at least 50 billion other galaxies, each one containing between ten million and 1 trillion stars! Within our own galaxy, Hubble has confirmed the existence of exoplanets, or planets outside our solar system. And it has allowed us to see deeper into space and farther back in time than ever before. And in doing all of this, Hubble has beamed back to earth those magnificent pictures of our universe which (as someone remarked), “has united our planet in wonder.”

Hubble is expected to continue functioning until 2020. Meanwhile its successor, the James Webb Space Telescope, is

scheduled to be launched in 2018. This infrared telescope will be able to look even farther into space and time than Hubble.

For me personally, I am happy to be living at the time when we have access to this marvelous invention. I thank God for the Hubble Telescope and all the information and knowledge it is giving us. When I gaze at some of its pictures and scan some of its data, I find myself asking, “What must God be like?”



*The sombrero galaxy which is 28 million light years away.*

## About the Sisters of Notre Dame, Chardon, Ohio

The Sisters of Notre Dame of Chardon, Ohio, belong to an international congregation of more than two thousand apostolic women religious. We are one in mind and one in heart for the transformation of the world in Christ.



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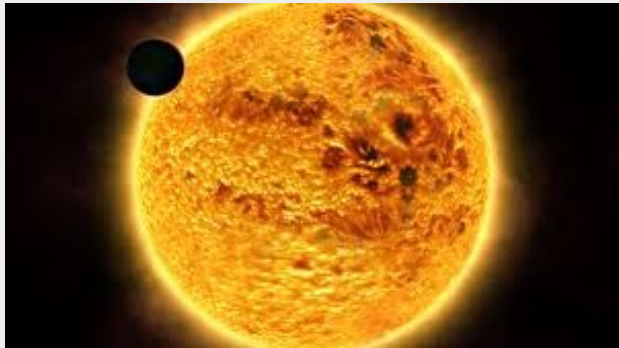
Or “If this created universe is so vast and so spectacular, what must the Creator be like?” The Hubble Telescope has made me (and probably many others) realize that God is “bigger,” more incredible, more mysterious, more wondrous, more astounding, more amazing, more awe-inspiring than we ever knew or thought or could imagine.

I would like to conclude this reflection with a few more images taken by Hubble. But first, the song I have selected is “How Great Thou Art.” After you listen to the song (and perhaps sing and pray along with it), let me know your thoughts on Hubble, the images from Hubble, or the song. Thank you!

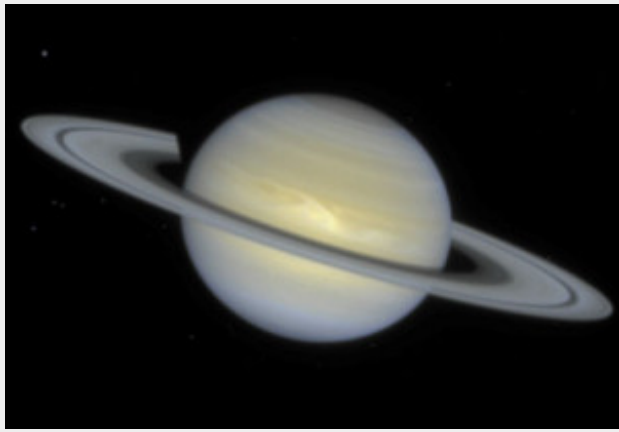
Here are a few more images from Hubble:



*Earth and a new moon.*



*An exoplanet orbiting around another sun in our galaxy,  
the Milky Way.*



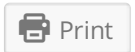
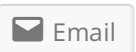
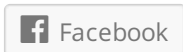
*A picture of beautiful Saturn.*



*A picture of rare overlapping galaxies.*

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**AlfredoJRios** April 27, 2015 at 1:22 am



Dios mío, me espanta tu grandeza al ver tu creación del cosmos! Y me siento tan pequeño como un grano de arena en el espacio tiempo! Gracias Padre Yahve por amarnos así,, por habernos enviado a tu hijo Jesus el Cristo y por darnos al Espíritu Santo, gracias infinitas por tu gran amor al hombre y por tu creación.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 10:03 am



Gracias, Alfredo! Hermana Melannie

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 27, 2015 at 5:03 am



Dear Readers,

On May 1 I will be giving a day for hospital chaplains, nurses, and care-givers at Holy Spirit Hospital in Camp Hill, PA. Once again I ask for your prayers for this day. Thank you very much! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

**Kathleen Magiera** April 27, 2015 at 5:32 am



What beautiful images from the Hubble telescope! They remind how vast the universe is and how big is our Creator. I sometimes keep God in a very small box.

Thanks for the reflection Sr. Melanie.

Kathleen

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 10:01 am



Dear Kathleen, I agree. Sometimes we make God too small....maybe so we can "manage him"...Thanks again for writing! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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**Michelle Authier** April 27, 2015 at 6:46 am



Oooooooooommmmm is as close as I get to express my feelings as I see some of the infinite womb in which we exist!!!

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 10:00 am



Dear Michelle, you said it well! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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**JoAnn Welch** April 27, 2015 at 9:14 am





All I can say is Wow!! What an incredible God we have...

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 9:59 am



Amen to that, JoAnn! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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**Kathy McCoy** April 27, 2015 at 9:44 am



Awe inspiring! The words, the pictures and the music are beautifully put together. Thank you so much for your postings! I look forward to every Monday! I was taught by the Sisters of Notre Dame in high school in Providence, RI, and am so happy to still have this connection with them. Thank you again.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 9:59 am



Dear Kathy, The Notre Dames you had were my "first cousins," the Notre Dame de Namur... And thank you for reading my blog each week. My readers (such as you) keep me writing! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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**Carolyn Shalhoub** April 27, 2015 at 11:01 am



Thank you thank you thank you.....

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 9:57 am



Carolyn...you're welcome, you're welcome, you're welcome. Sr.  
Melannie

REPLY

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**Annie** April 27, 2015 at 11:47 am



Wow! Thanks so much!

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 9:56 am



Wow! You're welcome so much, Annie! Melannie

REPLY

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**Margaret may** April 27, 2015 at 11:59 am



Thank you for your e-mails every week, especially today's. You, Sisters  
have brought us God for as long as I can remember.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 9:56 am



And thank you, Margaret, for your expression of gratitude for the Sisters  
in your life. I (we) are most grateful! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

**Karen** April 27, 2015 at 1:07 pm



For me, the Hubble Telescope will always be a lesson in perseverance. It received much critical press when it was found to be flawed, but thank goodness the US government and scientific community had the fortitude to keep at it and commit the funding to fix it. It reminds me that in every endeavor, many things may go wrong and (even after huge expense), problems will show up. I congratulate the people who press on despite the nay-sayers and see it through. And I am thankful that our heavenly Father continues to invest in ME, despite all my flaws.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 9:55 am



Thank you, Karen, for your take on this: the lesson in perseverance. And I like how you applied it to God, THE great “perseverer.” Sr. Melannie

REPLY

**Sister Janet** April 27, 2015 at 5:37 pm



I’ve always been a strong supporter of space travel and our ability to see beyond our own planet into more of God’s awesome universe. However, last night on 60 Minutes, they spoke about different countries sending various “instruments” into space. One has already smashed into something floating around up there and sent thousands of pieces into orbit. They also spoke about other countries wanting to shoot down U.S. satellites so we can’t “spy” on others.

It was very disheartening that something so good and beautiful can be misused for not-so-good endeavors. Let us hold it all before our Good God in prayer so that we can continue to see the awesome kind of images Sr. Melannie showed us.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 9:52 am



Dear Sr. Janet, I didn't see the "60 Minutes" show, but thank you for bringing it to my (our) attention. Yes, we have so much to pray for. Your words are a good reminder for all of us. Thank you! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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**Cathy Baier** April 27, 2015 at 8:32 pm



Hearing/singing How Great Thou Art always brings tears to my ears. We can be so focused on our small little lives that we forget the magnitude and magnificence of God's creation.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 9:51 am



Yes, Cathy, the magnificence of God's creation is something we need to contemplate regularly. It helps to put other things in perspective. Thank you for your response! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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**PJ** April 27, 2015 at 9:42 pm



OH!!!! My Gosh ! Melannie , what a gift you have and a what a gift you are To so many of God's people. I love the pictures the Hubble takes of our Beautiful space and creation. I follow them on my Star Walk app on my iPad you can follow it across the universe. It. Becomes such a wonderful prayer to contemplate God's nature. Love your pics.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 9:50 am



Dear PJ, I agree with your response to Hubble's pictures: OH!!! My Gosh! What more can we say? Melannie

REPLY

**Diane** April 28, 2015 at 4:19 pm



I was starting to "understand" from the beautiful world we live in, and the immense love of Jesus to redeem us, how great God is...but when I try to ponder that there are 50 billion galaxies out there, and how unfathomable and awesome God must be, I am humbled and struck with love and wonder.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 9:49 am



Dear Diane, Yes the beauty and immensity of the universe certainly humbles us and fills us with love and wonder. Thank you for expressing this so well! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

**Jan** April 29, 2015 at 6:49 am



Shared this blog with my son who is an engineer with NASA in Virginia and an avid amateur astronomer. He enjoyed it and commented that your blog name reminded him of M63, aka. "The Sunflower Galaxy" <http://Wikipedia.org/wiki/sunflower> galaxy. It is quite beautiful like the words we receive from Sunflower Seeds.

REPLY

**Melannie Svoboda SND** April 29, 2015 at 9:47 am



Dear Jan, This is so exciting. I went on line and saw pictures of this beautiful galaxy. Thank you and your son for bringing it to my attention! Sr.  
Melannie

REPLY

**Loretta** May 1, 2015 at 12:21 pm



Thank you sister for opening my eyes to appreciate this day, this minute, just how vast and incomprehensible God is. And, the amazing thing is, he still "makes time" to have a personal chat with me (and every one of his children) every day. I am humbled and so grateful for His presence in my life - Thanks for reminding me just "How Great Thou Art.!"

REPLY

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**Mary** May 3, 2015 at 9:06 am



Thank you Sister. That is one of my favorite songs.

Praise God for your work.

REPLY

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**Melannie Svoboda SND** May 3, 2015 at 9:48 am



It's one of my favorites too, Mary! Thank you for writing! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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GOD'S GOODNESS AND PROVIDENT CARE.



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