



CONTACT: Donald Lehr – The Nolan/Lehr Group
+1 (212) 967-8200 / mob +1 (917) 304-4058
dblehr@cs.com / www.templetonprize.org

Remarks by Heather Templeton Dill at the 2019 Templeton Prize Ceremony

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, May 29, 2019

Professor Gleiser. Dr. Robinson. Dr. Hanlon. Distinguished guests. Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good evening. I am Heather Templeton Dill, the president of the John Templeton Foundation. On behalf of the Trustees of the John Templeton Foundation, I welcome all of you to the Templeton Prize Ceremony honoring the 2019 Laureate, Professor Marcelo Gleiser, the Appleton Professor of Natural Philosophy and a professor of physics and astronomy at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire.

We are delighted to be here at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and I want to thank the Museum for the opportunity to hold this Ceremony in the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium, named for a beloved patron of this magnificent cultural institution. I hope that everyone joining us for tonight's event will be inspired by the vision of the Templeton Prize and the accomplishments of the 2019 laureate.

Sir John Templeton created the Templeton Prize in 1972 to recognize what he called the "marvelous new things going on religion." In his mind, the world honored writers, musicians, scientists, economists, and other academics for their accomplishments. But no one recognized the many accomplishments of those who were motivated by a spiritual impulse. Few appreciated that progress could be made in the spiritual realm of life just as we make progress in science and in technology. Sir John Templeton wanted to celebrate the spiritual quest and he created the Templeton Prize to do just that.

Prize Laureates have included humanitarians such as Mother Teresa, Chiara Lubich, and Jean Vanier. And here I pause to pay tribute to Jean Vanier, who received the Templeton Prize in 2015 and who passed away just a few weeks ago at the age of 90.

Born in Geneva to a prominent Canadian family, Jean served in the Royal Navies of Great Britain and Canada; he earned a Ph.D., and taught philosophy at the University of Toronto. But his life was forever transformed in 1963 when he visited several institutions in France for people with intellectual disabilities. He was horrified by what he encountered, and by how the men there were treated.

And so, deeply moved by this experience, he bought a dilapidated house north of Paris and invited two of those men to come share the house with him and live together – as friends. This simple decision launched a movement that spread from France to Canada and to 149 locations around the world.

Jean Vanier's singular insight was that these relationships, forged in the furnace of community life, can be uniquely and mutually transformative, where those without disabilities gain wisdom about the spiritual dimension of life through friendship with their disabled housemates.

Jean Vanier was a man whose generosity, empathy, and loving kindness have inspired millions, and whose life's work provides a shining example of the way in which a deep spirituality contributes to human flourishing.

In addition to these great humanitarians, the Prize has also been given to religious figures such as the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks.

Last year's Laureate, His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan, received the Templeton Prize for his commitment to intra-faith and inter-faith dialogue. King Abdullah was honored for doing more to seek religious harmony within Islam, and between Islam and other religions, than any other living political leader. He is another example of one motivated by spiritual or religious commitments to make progress and to improve the human condition.

Most importantly, for the purposes of tonight's event, the judges for the Templeton Prize have also recognized scientists for their insights and for the way in which their scientific work has expanded our understanding of and appreciation for spiritual concepts. These have included physicists and astronomers such as Martin Rees, Freeman Dyson, and the Nobel laureate Charles Townes. In 1995, Dr. Paul Davies received the Templeton Prize in part for his ability to clearly articulate the profound questions that emerge when we understand more about the natural world. In his acceptance speech, Dr. Davies said, "the contrived nature of physical existence is just too fantastic to take on board as simply given. It points forcefully to a deeper underlying meaning to existence."

All of these Laureates – the scientists, the humanitarians, and the religious leaders – affirm that our interactions with one other, our scientific investigations, and our religious traditions, as well as our spiritual insights, are relevant and essential ways of understanding and engaging with the world we inhabit.

This year we honor another scientist.

Professor Marcelo Gleiser is receiving the 2019 Prize for his body of work that presents science as a spiritual quest to understand the origins of the universe and of life on Earth. Science, philosophy, and

spirituality, he offers, are complementary expressions of humanity's need to embrace mystery and explore the unknown.

Sir John Templeton wrote, that "A scientist can hardly be successful over the long term without being humble before the external realities which provide the enduring basis for his success in making discoveries."

Marcelo both embodies this spirit of humility, and eloquently explains its importance. He writes in his book *The Island of Knowledge* that as we learn more, we become increasingly aware of that which we do not know or that which we cannot explain. It's a theme that reappears throughout Marcelo's work in his books, in his essays, and in the many public events that he hosts both here in the US and in his native country, Brazil.

For Marcelo this scientific impulse to endlessly explore mystery becomes a form of the spiritual impulse. Both are searching for meaning, purpose, and the answer to questions that belie easy answers. Both require robust philosophical models for making sense of new information and neither science nor spiritual insights alone can provide a full picture of the nature of reality. In his book *The Simple Beauty of the Unexpected*, Marcelo writes that, "A key ingredient of the island metaphor is not only that we are surrounded by unknowns, but that some of these unknowns are unknowable: there are well-posed questions that science can't answer."

Yet even in the face of the enduring unknown, Marcelo displays an undeniable joy of exploration. In his research, writing, and speaking, he has found a way to create a constructive engagement between the sciences and the humanities, and to propose a unifying vision rooted in an appreciation for humankind's uniqueness in the cosmos. And for these insights, we are proud to honor and celebrate Marcelo's contributions.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the John Templeton Foundation, we congratulate the 2019 Templeton Prize Laureate, Professor Marcelo Gleiser.

Thank you all for being here to celebrate and honor Professor Marcelo Gleiser.

I am now pleased to introduce our two speakers. They will each come up to speak in turn as noted in your program.

Dr. Marilynne Robinson is a Pulitzer-Prize winning novelist and an acclaimed essayist. She is the author of *Housekeeping*, *Gilead*, *Home*, and *Lila*, and non-fiction books including *When I Was a Child I Read Books*, *The Givenness of Things*, and, most recently, *What Are We Doing Here?* Dr. Robinson earned her Ph.D. at the University of Washington, and taught at the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa for 25 years.

She is the recipient of the National Humanities Medal, and the Library of Congress Lifetime Achievement Award in American Fiction, among many other distinctions. Her work is often rooted in theology, and always searches for a deeper truth and meaning, just as Marcelo does in his own writing.

Dr. Philip J. Hanlon is the president of Dartmouth College, and the 10th Dartmouth alumnus to serve as its president. Prior to becoming the president of Dartmouth, Dr. Hanlon served as provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at the University of Michigan, where he was also the Donald J. Lewis Collegiate Professor of Mathematics. His academic research is focused on probability and combinatorics, and the study of finite structures and bioinformatics. He still teaches first-year calculus and other courses at Dartmouth.

We will also have the pleasure this evening of listening to the Dartmouth Symphony Orchestra performing compositions chosen for this occasion by Marcelo and music director Filippo Ciabatti. Professor Gleiser selected the pieces we will hear tonight, noting that “Mahler speaks to my heart and spirit, Villa-Lobos to my Brazilian roots, and Mozart to the precision and mystery of the cosmic harmony.”

And later in the program, Secretary Emanuel Lobo de Andrade, Head of the Cultural Section of the Consulate General of Brazil in New York will offer words of congratulations from the Consulate General.

Ladies and Gentlemen – enjoy the program!

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