

4 SOLIDARITY/ACCOMPANIMENT

Acknowledge that in Jesus Christ the God of love embraces the cosmos in healing solidarity



3 PONDERING THE MYSTERY OF CREATION -- JESUS, LIKE US! EPISODE 3.mp4

Key Concepts

- Jesus Christ in solidarity not only with humans but with the whole created reality, including its experience of pain, suffering and death. In assuming flesh, Christ assumes the cosmos
- Deep incarnation is the “radical divine reach through human flesh all the way down into the very tissue of biological existence with its growth and decay, joined with the wide processes of evolving nature that beget and sustain life” (Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 196)
- Incarnation provides insight into “liberating, healing and inclusive love”. (McFague, *Body of God*, 161) Jesus paid a high price for this love.
- Jesus’ suffering freely chosen is an expression of love, and divine solidarity. This does not justify suffering.
- Resurrection says that death is not the end of the story either for Jesus or for Earth and cosmos. We have a core conviction that “all of reality exists within the embrace of God’s gracious love, and ... is going toward a fulfillment yet to come.”

Discussion

This is a change of theology from one of atonement to one of accompaniment or solidarity.

What difference does this make to our understanding of

- suffering,
- the purpose of Christ’s life,
- the connection between this life and fullness of life to come?

Concluding Reflection: Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's *Mass on the World*

Here, in a paraphrase by Ronald Rolheiser, is the prayer Teilhard prayed over the world, awakening to the sun that morning in China in 1923.

O God, since I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols and make the whole earth my altar and on it will offer to you all the labors and sufferings of the world.

As the rising sun moves as a sheet of fire across the horizon the earth wakes, trembles, and begins its daily tasks. I will place on my paten, O God, the harvest to be won by this renewal of labor. Into my chalice I will pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from the earth's fruits. My paten and my chalice are the depths of a soul laid widely open to all the forces which in a moment will rise up from every corner of the earth and converge upon the Spirit.

Grant me, Lord, to remember and make mystically present all those whom the light is now awakening to this new day. As I call these to mind, I remember first those who have shared life with me: family, community, friends, and colleagues. And I remember as well, more vaguely but all-inclusively, the whole of humanity, living and dead, and, not least, the physical earth itself, as I stand before you, O God, as a piece of this earth, as that place where the earth opens and closes to you.

And so, O God, over every living thing which is to spring up, to grow, to flower, to ripen during this day, I say again the words: "This is my body." And over every death-force which waits in readiness to corrode, to wither, to cut down, I speak again your words which express the supreme mystery of faith: "This is my blood." On my paten, I hold all who will live this day in vitality, the young, the strong, the healthy, the joy-filled; and in my chalice, I hold all that will be crushed and broken today as that vitality draws its life. I offer you on this all-embracing altar everything that is in our world, everything that is rising and everything that is dying, and ask you to bless it.

And our communion with you will not be complete, will not be Christian, if, together with the gains which this new day brings, we do not also accept, in our own name and in the name of the world, those processes, hidden or manifest, of enfeeblement, of aging, and of death, which unceasingly consume the universe, to its salvation or its condemnation. Lord, God, we deliver ourselves up with abandon to those fearful forces of dissolution which, we blindly believe, will this cause our narrow egos to be replaced by your divine presence. We gather into a single prayer both our delight in what we have and our thirst for what we lack.

Lord, lock us into the deepest depths of your heart; and then, holding us there, burn us, purify us, set us on fire, sublimate us, till we become utterly what you would have us to be, through the annihilation of all selfishness inside us. Amen.



RESOURCES FOR PRINCIPLE 4

For meditation

The Incarnation of God the Son signifies the taking up into unity with God not only of human nature, but in this human nature, in a sense of everything that is ‘flesh’: the whole of humanity, the entire visible and material world. The Incarnation, then, also has a cosmic significance, a cosmic dimension. The ‘first-born of all creation’, becoming incarnate in the individual humanity of Christ, unites himself in some way with the entire reality of humanity—which is also ‘flesh’—and in this reality with all ‘flesh’, with the whole of creation.¹

“I suddenly understood that in his final death scream Jesus gathered up all of the earth’s suffering throughout all time, bound it up and presented it before the heavenly throne, not in reams of words but in a sacred package encompassing the sorrows, the sufferings, the lost dreams of all creation, all peoples, all times, all conditions, and carried it directly to the pulsing, loving heart of the living trinity, where it is now. Jesus screams, and he, full of grace and truth, thereby took his and all anguish and transfigured it into a means of touching God.”²

“Continuously fired into being by the Giver of life, the living world is the dwelling place of God. Ontologically dependent on the Creator, it is empowered with the autonomy befitting a finite creature to operate freely in the course of its own evolution. In solidarity with the perishing of Christ who shares its flesh, it is a groaning, cruciform world, destined for resurrection. Existing in absolute dependence on its Maker, it bears the promise of new eschatological life, heading toward a final fulfilment, thanks to the *Alpha* and *Omega* whose fidelity knows no end.”³

¹ John Paul II, Encyclical *Lord and Giver of Life, On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World*, 50. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_18051986_dominum-et-vivificantem.html,

² Arlen Gray, privately published meditation, shared in personal correspondence with Elizabeth Johnson.

³ Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 235