

4 SOLIDARITY/ACCOMPANIMENT

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

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?



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