THE WAY

a review of Christian spirituality published by the British Jesuits

April 2020 *Volume 59, Number 2*

THE SPIRIT IN CREATION

Mosaic, Dome of Creation, St Mark's basilica, Venice

Book Reviews

Brian O'Leary on Ignatian discernment
Nicholas King on faith and imagination
Austen Ivereigh on the significance of church councils
John Pridmore on Radical Orthodoxy
Eric Southworth on a new collection of essays about Teresa of Ávila
Nicolas Steeves on a biography of Michael Paul Gallagher
Elizabeth Ruth Obbard on Carmelite spirituality
Anthony Nye on reflections on the Gospels

FOR AUTHORS

The Way warmly invites readers to submit articles with a view to publication (please send an electronic text to the.way@campion.ox.ac.uk). They should normally be about 4,000 words long, and be in keeping with the journal's aims. The Editor is always ready to discuss possible ideas. A Special Issue is planned for October 2020 on Pope Francis and his papacy, so articles in this area are particularly welcome.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the Ignatius Centre, Guelph, Ontario, for permission to use the photograph on p. 14. The scripture quotations herein are generally from the New Revised Standard Version Bible © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

ABBREVIATIONS

Autobiography	'Reminiscences (Autobiography)', in *Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996)
Constitutions	in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)
Diary	'The Spiritual Diary', in *Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996)
Dir	*On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599*, translated and edited by Martin E. Palmer (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)
Exx	*The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, translated by George E. Ganss (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992)
GC	General Congregation, in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009) and *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2017)
MHSJ	Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, 157 volumes (Madrid and Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1898–)

Papal documents may be found at www.vatican.va

FOREWORD

SINCE ITS RELAUNCH at the turn of the millennium, *The Way* has been produced in two different formats. Three of each year's quarterly issues publish material submitted by writers directly, dealing with their interests and concerns, without any predetermined underlying theme. (Writing the foreword on those occasions thus becomes a challenge to trace some common threads through the variety!) By contrast one issue annually, the special issue, is made up of commissioned articles considering different aspects of a topic that the Editorial Board considers important—most recently, in October last year, the idea of a discerning Church.

This issue of *The Way* is not one of the special issues, although you could be forgiven for thinking at first sight that it was. Many of the authors here are keen to explore the idea of what it means to think of the Spirit of God permeating creation, and what the implications of this are for Christian life and action in the world. Gem Yecla experiences 'cosmic intimacy' as a connection between God and humanity offering a possible basis for a contemporary spirituality that addresses seriously the ecological concerns that are of particular concern today. Jojo Fung explores the mystical relationship with God's creative Spirit, present in all things, from stars to neutrinos, and finds parallels with the ways in which many indigenous people have related for centuries to the world around them. Pope Francis drew on similar ideas in his widely influential 2015 encyclical *Laudato si'*, and Eric Jensen traces the Pope's call in that document to a kind of ecological conversion.

A renewed spirituality with an ecological starting point needs to be rooted firmly both in theology and science. Ahilya Noone describes a theology of the 'cosmic Christ' and its long history in Christian thought. The three linked pieces that are reprinted here from the online journal *Thinking Faith* are all written by British Province Jesuits with a background in science. Paolo Beltrame considers the role that faith has to play in science; Kensy Joseph draws a parallel between the ways in which science is understood and the 'unknown God' preached by St Paul on the Areopagus in Athens; and Michael Smith sketches the life and work of Teilhard de Chardin, palaeontologist and priest.

The remaining articles in this issue are admittedly more varied in their concerns. Alcoholics Anonymous prefer those writing about their programmes to do so without using their own names. Such an article here links their Twelve Steps to the experience of pilgrimage. A regular contributor, Bob Doud, shows how the virtue of compassion is central to the developing priestly relationship with God to which everyone baptized is called. In our *Spirituality and Living* strand, Marion Morgan offers a spiritual perspective on ageing. And, marking the bicentenary of its foundation, Teresa White considers the changing relationship between her own congregation, the Faithful Companions of Jesus, and the Jesuit order.

At least since the first pictures of the Earth seen from space were broadcast widely in the 1960s, humanity has been developing a clearer sense of its place in the cosmos. For some, this reduces us to an ever-greater insignificance, marooned on a small planet orbiting an average star in the depths of a galaxy that is itself merely one among millions. If spirituality is to answer the challenge of this outlook, it must be robust enough to offer an alternative viewpoint. Not necessarily by reinstating 'Man' as the Lord of Creation, subduing, dominating and exploiting everything else for his own ends; but by recognising human beings as creatures called by God to work with the creator who labours to bring about the realm of God in its fullness. The contributors to this journal indicate, in their different ways, some of the myriad approaches that can together build up just such a robust spirituality.

Paul Nicholson SJ
Editor

ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION AND THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Eric Jensen

JOHN PAUL II was the first pope to call for a global ecological conversion; his predecessor, Paul VI, and his successor, Benedict XVI, also spoke out against the degradation of nature and the exploitation of the natural environment.[1] More recently, in 2015, Pope Francis devoted an entire encyclical letter to the ecological crisis: *Laudato si'*. In the third part of its final chapter, he turns to the notion of ecological conversion: 'Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds …. The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion.'[2]

What is to be understood by such an ecological conversion? How would this conversion come about? What would it look like as a community conversion? Do the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius have a role to play in bringing it about?

Let us start by saying that conversion is transformational: it transforms both the one who undergoes it—in his or her interior world of ideas and images—and the way that person relates to the exterior world where he or she operates. While private and personal, it can also become communal and even historical. As Bernard Lonergan wrote:

> By conversion is understood the transformation of the subject and his world …. It is as if one's eyes were opened and one's former world faded and fell away .... Conversion is existential, intensely personal, utterly intimate. But it is not so private as to be solitary. It can happen to many, and they can form a community to sustain one another in their self-transformation …. Finally, what can become communal can become historical. It can pass from generation to generation ….[3]

1 As quoted in Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, nn. 4, 5, 6.
2 *Laudato si'*, n. 219.
3 Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: U. of Toronto, 2007 [1972]), 130–131.

What is Ecological Conversion?

It is with individuals, of course, that conversion begins, and if an individual, such as Thomas Merton, records his or her experiences in a journal, we can trace the transformations as they unfold. When Merton first came upon a review of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, he was shocked to learn 'what is happening to birds as a result of the indiscriminate use of poisons'.[4] When he later read the book for himself, his eyes were opened to his own complicity in this destructive practice, causing him to renounce totally his 'own follies with DDT'.[5] What was transformed was, first, his own awareness of what he was involved in; and, as his awareness and understanding grew, his ways of relating to his natural surroundings also underwent a transformation.

Thomas Merton near his hermitage, November 1964

Though Merton's moment of conversion probably began in the first sudden shock of reading about Carson's book, the groundwork had been laid long before, in early childhood, through the influence of his parents (both painters), who gave him a love for nature and taught him to see and care for the natural world around him.[6] This was a key first step involving empathy with the natural world in all its beauty and fragility, a *sine qua non* for what would follow.

However Merton's particular transformation in the early 1960s amounted to an *environmental* rather than *ecological* conversion: it was focused on the natural environment where he lived as a monk and hermit in the Kentucky woods. A further step was required

[4] Thomas Merton, *The Journals of Thomas Merton*, volume 4, *1960–1963: Turning toward the World. The Pivotal Years* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 274, quoted in Monica Weis, *The Environmental Vision of Thomas Merton* (Lexington: U. of Kentucky, 2011), 12.
[5] Thomas Merton to Rachel Carson, quoted in Weis, *Environmental Vision of Thomas Merton*, 18.
[6] Weis, *Environmental Vision of Thomas Merton*, 29–33.

in order to develop an ecological vision.[7] Merton needed to move from empathy with the natural world to understanding it as an interlocking set of systems sustaining all life on the planet. His environmental conversion was only a first unfolding in the 'evolution of an ecological consciousness'.[8]

Stages in the Development of Ecological Consciousness

Just as there are stages in the development of consciousness as such, so also there are stages in the development of ecological consciousness.[9] Historically, a first step consisted in the *conservation movement*, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, which led eventually to the establishment of national parks in the United States and elsewhere (Yellowstone, in Wyoming, the world's first national park, was established in 1872).[10] Henry David Thoreau gave philosophical expression to this movement in *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854), while Gerard Manley Hopkins gave it poetic expression, for example in 'Inversnaid' (1881):

> What would the world be, once bereft
> Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
> O let them be left, wildness and wet,
> Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.[11]

A second stage in this development was the *environmental movement*, sparked by the publication of *Silent Spring*. The book had a profound impact upon many, and it led to the establishment in the USA of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970 and to the banning of DDT in 1972.[12] That same year, in Stockholm, the UN Conference on Human Environment led to the establishment in many countries of ministries of the environment, and later to political representation by various Green

[7] 'The word *ecology* was coined by the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel, and has been defined variously as "the study of the interrelationships of organisms with their environment and each other", "the economy of nature" and "the biology of ecosystems"'. (*Encyclopedia Britannica)*

[8] Weis, *Environmental Vision of Thomas Merton,* 8.

[9] See chapter 3, 'Meaning', and especially section 5, 'Linguistic Meaning', in Lonergan, *Method in Theology*.

[10] See 'Warming Alters Yellowstone's Soul', *The New York Times International Weekly* (15–16 December 2018), 1, 6.

[11] Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'Inversnaid', in *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, edited by Norman H. MacKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 168.

[12] Weis, *Environmental Vision of Thomas Merton*, 12. DDT was banned in most countries worldwide over the next decade.

parties in Europe and elsewhere.[13] Thus the environmental movement called forth a new awareness of the impact of human actions on the natural world, and led to the implementation of wide-ranging political decisions.

A third stage has been the *ecological movement*, a coming together of minds on a global level to address the continued existence of life on Earth itself and the survival of the interconnected systems that sustain it. This movement has been growing internationally, as demonstrated by the successive United Nations Conferences on Climate Change, by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and its special report on global warming (7 October 2018), and by gatherings of the Parliament of the World's Religions.[14] In the USA there is Thomas L. Friedman's 'Green New Deal' proposal. Yet, as Friedman himself points out, 'I believe there is only one thing as big as Mother Nature, and that is Father Greed—a.k.a. the market'.[15] Therefore, unless there is a true ecological conversion, with a subsequent 'change of course and direction', on the part of those who wield political and financial power, greed for short-term gain will inevitably oppose and undo our best idealistic efforts.[16]

A True Ecological Conversion

How should this true ecological conversion come about? In her most recent book, which makes frequent use of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'* and adopts the literary form of a Platonic dialogue, Elizabeth A. Johnson opens a way for us with what she calls 'the profound step of conversion to the earth as God's beloved creation'.[17] A true ecological conversion must also be a religious conversion, that acknowledges Earth as part of a created universe brought into being by a personal, loving Creator. Johnson goes on to say,

[13] See Ann Hironaka, *Greening the Globe: World Society and Environmental Change* (Cambridge: CUP, 2014), 53–54, 83. For more on the history of Green political parties, see *The Evolution of Green Politics: Development and Change within European Green Parties* (London: Earthscan, 2002).

[14] See the yearly reports of the independent thinktank the International Institute for Sustainable Development, from the Paris Agreement of 2015 to the conference in New York on 23 September 2019, at https://www.iisd.org/about/annual-reports; IPCC, 'Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5ºC', available at https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/; https://parliamentofreligions.org/; and see also *Faith and the Common Good*, at https://www.faithcommongood.org/, all accessed 23 March 2020.

[15] Thomas L. Friedman, 'The Green New Deal Rises Again', *The New York Times International Weekly* (19–20 January 2019), 11.

[16] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 130. Lonergan argues that conversion 'is not just a development or even a series of developments. Rather it is a resultant change of course and direction.'

[17] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Creation and the Cross: The Mercy of God for a Planet in Peril* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2018), 195.

> This is a turning that will impact our whole lives. It will expand our understanding of the God we are called to love with all our heart and soul, mind and strength, making clear that the Creator is also the Redeemer who accompanies the whole natural world with saving compassion. It will also expand the neighbour we are called to love as ourselves, since the beaten-up traveller left by the side of the road whose wounds we must tend to includes needy and poor human beings along with natural ecosystems and all their creatures.[18]

Johnson builds an argument to demonstrate that creation, incarnation and salvation all spring from a God who is love, who is compassion for every created thing. She devotes a good part of her book to establishing 'a theology of salvation as accompaniment, an "I am with you to deliver you" view of God's saving work'. With the incarnation there comes 'divine involvement with the flesh of all creation in its suffering and dying, with the merciful promise of new life that only a God who creates could give'.[19]

Along with many other contemporary theologians, Johnson rejects Anselm's theory of atonement—that Christ's death on the cross atoned for sinful humanity by repaying 'a debt to God, whose infinite honour has been offended past the limit of any purely human act of compensation'.[20] She interprets the cross in a way that 'foregrounds the meaning of salvation as God's accompanying the whole troubled, sinful, agonized, and dying world into the depths of agony and death and beyond. Mercy upon mercy.' Thus the cross can be understood as 'a particular event of divine solidarity with the suffering and death of all creatures'.[21]

A Vision of Hope

Such a vision gives us hope, not that Earth will be spared the conflagration that seems surely to be coming, but that God will be with us in it, just as God was with Jesus in his suffering and death.[22] Only such a hope can empower us to go on acting against the forces of destruction, even when action may seem futile, rather than sinking into a slough of despond. For Lonergan:

[18] Johnson, *Creation and the Cross*, 195–196.
[19] Johnson, *Creation and the Cross*, 222.
[20] Lisa Sowle Cahill, '*Quaestio disputata*: The Atonement Paradigm: Does It Still Have Explanatory Value?' *Theological Studies,* 68/2 (2007), 418.
[21] Johnson, *Creation and the Cross*, 194, 222.
[22] See 'As the World Burns', a report on wildfires around the world in *Harper's Magazine* (August 2018), 23–40.

> A religion that promotes self-transcendence to the point, not merely of justice, but of self-sacrificing love, will have a redemptive role in human society inasmuch as such love can undo the mischief of decline and restore the cumulative process of progress.[23]

Christians, because of their vast numbers, can have a huge impact on undoing the damage done to Earth if they can come to see Earth, not just as our home, but as beloved by the Creator, and then respond to it with self-sacrificing love.

Johnson says toward the end of her book,

> A whole agenda arises when we realize that for this conversion to take root it needs to find expression in church liturgies and eucharistic prayers, in religious art and music, in public preaching and teaching, and in private prayers and spirituality, and devotional writing.[24]

We might also add that ecological conversion may find expression in the giving of the Spiritual Exercises, which are aimed simultaneously at the ongoing conversion of individuals and the establishment of God's reign in the world.[25] As Trileigh Tucker affirms, 'The wisdom of the Spiritual Exercises can offer new ways of entering into environmental concerns and addressing our current ecological crisis'.[26]

But how would such a conversion to Earth as God's beloved creation come about? And how are we to reach those who are not Christian or who are not religious at all, who are not going to listen to homilies or read devotional literature or make the Exercises? Can people come to see Earth as part of God's beloved creation if they believe neither in God nor in creation? Though millennials (those born between 1980 and 2000) tend to be interested in spirituality rather than religion, this does not stop them from looking to religious communities for inspiration.[27]

From Common Sense to a Genuine Moral Conversion

The land, the water, the air are surely there to help us achieve whatever purpose human beings may imagine for themselves, whether they believe

[23] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 54.
[24] Johnson, *Creation and the Cross*, 226.
[25] See Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 30.
[26] Trileigh Tucker, 'Ecology and the Spiritual Exercises', *The Way*, 43/1 (January 2004), 8.
[27] See *Nuns and Nones*, at https://www.nunsandnones.org/. This project brings together religious sisters and young people of no religious conviction to promote 'community and spiritual formation, land stewardship, and social action'.

in creation or not, but these things cannot continue to help us if we continue to pollute them. It is simply common sense to come to the realisation that we must stop destroying the very things our life and our work depend upon.

But once we have come to know how intricately complex and interrelated the beings that make up and sustain the life and health of the planet are, and have begun to understand how destructive our modern world, dominated by the 'left-brain', has become, then what begins as common sense develops into an enormously complicated challenge.[28] It demands transformation—step by painful step, stage by patient stage—of our ways of thinking, imagining and acting, in order to undo the damage we have done, individually and collectively, and to remake our relationships with all those other beings with whom we share planet Earth. This must call forth communal efforts of heroic magnitude.

Empathy is still the key. Even if people are irreligious—as was the young Thomas Merton—they can still have empathy for the natural world and can be open to understanding it as an amazing piece of work, as something truly good and worth preserving. Empathy can open people to a genuine moral conversion, opting for the good of the planet and of every creature that dwells on it, even if this means setting aside personal preferences and desires. For Bernard Lonergan, 'Moral conversion changes the criterion of one's decisions and choices from satisfaction to values'; it 'consists in opting for the truly good, even for the value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflict'.[29]

Empathy can open people to a genuine moral conversion

Further, in this time of ecological crisis, as the world convulses with storms and fires, people can be moved to respond by taking action. Responding to the moral imperative to act is itself a conversion on a moral level: 'deciding is one thing, doing is another'.[30]

Two Examples of Response to the Ecological Crisis

At the beginning of 2018 more than 25,000 students in France, disillusioned with a capitalist system of super-consumerism and attempting to transform ecological and social discussion into significant and concrete action,

[28] See Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2012).
[29] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 240.
[30] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 240.

signed the *Manifeste étudiant pour un réveil écologique* (Student Manifesto for an Ecological Awakening), which led to the formation of Le Campus de la Transition, a project which aims to bring together in one place a collective—people from many walks of life (academics, students, staff, ecologists and even members of multinationals)—to create a new pedagogy.[31]

The campus became real with the gift, from the Sisters of the Assumption, of the château de Forges, a property on the boundary between the Île-de-France and Burgundy. Though the project is still in its very early stages, the hope is that people with little experience or with much, working together to produce their food and living together for various lengths of time (six months or less), will engage in conversations that will ultimately be transformative. What is demanded of each participant is a real desire to change one's way of life: to stop living on credit that will be repaid by the resources of the planet and by future generations.

Similar work is going on at Ignatius Jesuit Centre in Guelph, Ontario, where I am based: each year university students and graduates from many parts of Canada join us for six months (some for less) to learn ecological methods of growing vegetables on our six hundred acres of organic farmland (free of all pesticides and herbicides). One hundred

Interns at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre shared agriculture programme

[31] See Xavier de Bénazé, 'Vivre ensemble la conversion écologique', *Christus*, 262 (April 2019), 92–100.

of these acres have been set aside in perpetuity for the establishment of an old-growth forest, from which invasive species are being removed and where thousands of trees are planted each year, many by children from local elementary schools. Our ongoing challenge is to find new ways to integrate into all this the Ignatian spirituality which, for sixty years, has drawn people from all over the globe to make the thirty-day Spiritual Exercises as well as shorter individually directed retreats.

Many others around the world are also responding. They are acting in all sorts of ways which together constitute a growing ecological movement. A multiplicity of organizations and groups focused on ecological concerns can be found in most parts of the world, often brought together by the internet. The extent and complexity of contemporary electronic communications have created what Walter J. Ong calls 'secondary orality': a modern-day form of spoken, as opposed to written, culture.

> Secondary orality generated a strong group sense, for listening to spoken words forms hearers into a group, a true audience, just as reading written or printed texts turns individuals in on themselves. But secondary orality generates a sense for groups immeasurably larger than those of primary oral culture—McLuhan's 'global village'.[32]

This culture offers the possibility of establishing a truly global community—but a community of persons intent not just on communicating with one another but on saving planet Earth. Such a movement involves conversion on a moral level surely, but it can call forth conversion on other levels as well.

Levels of Consciousness and Levels of Conversion

Different levels of conversion assume different levels of consciousness. Lonergan writes about how conscious awareness begins in experience, seeks understanding, calls for judgment of the correctness or completeness of its understanding, yielding a conclusion which may then demand deliberation or discernment, decision and action. He describes,

> … four successive, related, but qualitatively different levels. There is the *empirical* level on which we sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, move. There is an *intellectual* level on which we inquire, come

[32] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Routledge, 1982), 136. And see Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: U. of Toronto, 1962) and *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

> to understand, express what we have understood, work out the presuppositions and implications of our expression. There is the *rational* level on which we reflect, marshal the evidence, pass judgment on the truth or falsity, certainty or probability, of a statement. There is the *responsible* level on which we are concerned with ourselves, our own operations, our goals, and so deliberate about possible courses of action, evaluate them, decide, and carry out our decisions.[33]

The same conscious and intentional operations (experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding) on different levels of consciousness (empirical, intellectual, rational, responsible) occur in all individuals, though not always with the same degree of awareness. The different levels of consciousness are part of one dynamic movement, which is the human desire to know, the desire for self-transcendence that Lonergan calls 'the eros of the human spirit'.[34]

What we desire to know is not just what is true but also what is good.[35] And the ultimate terrestrial good is not possible without the survival of our home, the Earth itself. People can be moved by the goodness and beauty of things to fall in love with them. It is this falling in love with the beautiful complexity of Earth that opens us to the possibility of a Being who is pure goodness, pure intelligence and all beautiful, and to the possibility of coming eventually to love that Being—in other words, to religious conversion. Such a religious conversion is aided by a growing recognition of the need for a saviour: alone, we ourselves cannot save the planet.

Though religious conversion may normally lead to a moral conversion, there is no reason why a moral conversion cannot come first and then lead to a religious conversion.[36] When the moral conversion concerns saving planet Earth itself, falling in love with the world in all its complex beauty often leads to falling in love with the Source of all beauty. It is thus a conversion not just to helping save the Earth (a moral conversion), but a conversion to Earth 'as God's beloved creation', the conversion for which Elizabeth Johnson calls.[37] Such a religious conversion involves a

[33] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 9. Lonergan sets out his ideas at more length in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1958).
[34] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 242, and see 13.
[35] See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 13.
[36] '… from a causal viewpoint, one would say that first there is God's gift of his love. Next, the eye of this love reveals values in all their splendor, while the strength of this love brings about their realization, and that is moral conversion.' (Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 243)
[37] Johnson, *Creation and the Cross*, 195.

choice, a decision to believe; and, of course, it involves grace. It also involves a development process and the acquisition of skills, 'learning new operations, and … bringing [people] together in new combinations to new ends'.[38]

Ecological Conversion and the Spiritual Exercises

The Society of Jesus began with a few individuals who 'formed a community to sustain one another in their self-transformation': a community which, despite reversals, continues from generation to generation to help in the transformation of others through the Spiritual Exercises.

The Exercises are aimed at personal transformation or conversion, at 'the deep change of heart that can only arise out of a new personal discovery of God's mercy'.[39] This change of heart normally occurs during the First Week of the Exercises.[40] The Second and Third Weeks lead us to a continuing conversion, to a deeper and deeper attachment to the person of Jesus—through his incarnation and birth, through his call to follow him in a new way, and through his compassionate dying, sharing the lot of two crucified criminals.[41]

But it is at the end of the Fourth Week, after the joy of the resurrection and in the Contemplation to Attain Love, that we begin to see how the Exercises can lead to an ecological conversion. There the person making the Exercises moves from contemplating the gifts of creation in all their magnificent multiplicity to the dynamic presence of the Creator dwelling in all that has been created—labouring and working 'for me in all creatures on the face of the earth' (Exx 236). 'All creatures on the face of the earth' is a phrase that opens us to the intimate relationship that God has with every single thing that exists, and in turn opens us to the intimate relationship that each of us has with everything in which God is dwelling and labouring for me, for us.

From Love of the Creator to Love of Creation

If the God who is Love itself, who *is* Compassion, is so intimately present and active in every creature, in every particle, delighting in creating

[38] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 30.
[39] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 44.
[40] See Eric Jensen, 'Hell and the Image of God in the Spiritual Exercises', *The Way*, 57/3 (July 2018), 91–102, on taking into account subsequent cultural and theological developments when making and giving the Exercises, especially the First Week.
[41] See Eric Jensen, 'The Kingdom Exercise: Two Suggestions', *The Way*, 57/2 (April 2018), 101–109.

and in creation, loving it and through it loving us who contemplate it, then it is hard to imagine this God as indifferent to the fate of all these creatures. It seems obvious that the Contemplation to Attain Love is meant to lead us not only to a love of the Creator but also to a love of creation, to being in love with both—out of compassion for everything that lives and suffers and dies. If God dwells in us and in all things, making temples of them, then we should feel moved to preserve these sacred things.

As the Exercises are meant to lead to a decision, to an 'election', usually near the end of the Second Week, so also at the end of the Exercises, the Contemplation to Attain Love could lead to an *ecological election*, to a decision to serve the Creator in serving creation out of love for all that God has made. Here let me quote just one telling sentence from a recent Jesuit General Congregation: 'We Jesuits are called to help heal a broken world, promoting a new way of producing and consuming, which puts God's creation at the centre'.[42]

An ecological election, to put God's creation at the centre, would no doubt involve profound changes in our way of life, or at least a transition to a new, more ecologically sound way of life, and could flow naturally out of a recapitulation of the 'reform of life' (Exx 189) made in the Second Week. In the Exercises' concluding prayer, the *Suscipe* (a Latin word which here means not merely to *take* but to *take under one's protection*),[43] we are called to surrender to God's protective love all that has been lavished on us, so that we in turn may emulate the Creator in protecting and caring for creation—the task first given to humankind in the beginning in Eden Garden (Genesis 2:15).

Eric Jensen SJ was born in Montreal in 1936 and entered the Society of Jesus in 1958. He has served as a high-school teacher and pastor in Winnipeg, and lives and works in Guelph, Ontario. Now, in his third career, he gives the Spiritual Exercises and writes in his spare time. His most recent book is *Ignatius Loyola and You: Learning to Become a Reflective Christian* (2018).

[42] GC 36, decree 1, n. 29.
[43] See Eric Jensen, 'The Spanish Autograph or the Latin Vulgate?' *The Way*, 53/3 (July 2014), 85.

THE COSMIC CHRIST

Ahilya Noone

IN AN ERA WHEN humanity's destructive impact on the environment is increasingly acknowledged, theologians have been exercised to determine whether it is possible to interpret Christ in a way that can provide an ethical and spiritual basis for Christianity's care for creation. One such possibility might be located within a christology that regards all creation as being pervaded or infused with the 'cosmic Christ'. This christology regards God as indwelling in creation: a God continually engaged with the whole created world rather than simply being its creator at a single point in time. Such a christology, which is part of the earliest Christian tradition, can provide an ethical and spiritual basis for the Christian's role in caring for creation.

The term 'cosmic Christ' can be expressed and understood in various ways. It is 'that aspect of God which pervades all creation, the Christ who 'fills the universe in all its parts'.[1] As James Lyons writes:

> When the epithet 'cosmic' is used of Christ, he is said to be the instrument in God's creative activity, the source and goal of all things, the bond and sustaining power of the whole creation; he is called the head and ruler of the universe.[2]

Ilia Delio comments on this passage: 'Basically the term relates Christ to the entire created order, emphasizing that Christ's relationship to creation extends beyond the compass of earthly humans and includes the whole cosmos'.[3] According to Celia Deane-Drummond it implies,

[1] Margaret Pirkl, 'The Cosmic Christ', now only available from the Internet Archive, http://web.archive.org/web/20160809012230/https://osfphila.org/files/file/The%20Cosmic%20Christ9-19-06.doc, accessed 24 March 2020.
[2] James A. Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin: A Comparative Study* (Oxford: OUP, 1982), 1.
[3] Ilia Delio, *Christ in Evolution* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 50.

> … seeing Christ in a different kind of way. Not narrowly as a human being, but also in a cosmic sense, to recover that cosmic Christology, which again is part of the liturgical approach of ancient writers like [Maximus] the Confessor, for example, who had a clear concept of cosmic liturgy.[4]

The cosmic Christ is expressed through God's role in creation, incarnation and reconciliation. Recently, certain theologians have also introduced the term 'deep incarnation' to express the understanding that 'when God became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ, this had significance for the whole cosmos and not just for human beings'.[5]

Origins

The Bible

Several biblical texts (Colossians 1:15–20; Ephesians 1:9–10; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:2–3) speak of the connection between Christ and the natural world. The particular conception of the cosmic Christ has its origins in the text of Colossians 1:15–20.

> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

The origin of this text is debated.[6] But it is generally agreed that it portrays a Christ who is indisputably the origin and centre, integral to and head of 'all things', that is, all creation. As the 'image of God and

[4] Celia Deane-Drummond, 'Recovering the Cosmic Christ', at https://catholicecology.net/blog/interview-dr-celia-deane-drummond-part-2-recovering-cosmic-christ, accessed 20 August 2018.

[5] Celia Deane-Drummond, *A Primer in Ecotheology: Theology for a Fragile Earth* (Eugene: Cascade, 2017), 139.

[6] See Vicky S. Balabanski. 'Hellenistic Cosmology and the Letter to the Colossians: Towards an Ecological Hermeneutic', in *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, edited by David H. Horrell and others (London: T. and T. Clark, 2010), 95. The cosmology of Colossians is an element that creates doubt for some as to its Pauline authorship.

firstborn of all creation' Christ is the manifestation of God.[7] Christ's life as a human on earth, as recounted in the Gospels—his miracles, healings and casting out of demons, his power over the forces of nature—reveals his expansive cosmic compass. This same Christ is present before creation and takes precedence over all creation, holding all things together. That all creation, has been created 'through' him and 'for' him emphasizes a Christ within whom creation has its origin and its integrity.

As the 'firstborn from the dead' he has altered the future of 'all things'. Traditionally Christ, through his death, 'reconciled all humankind', removing the stain of original sin. Reconciliation can also be understood as restoring or renewing; Christ's role in the renewing of all creation is described in the Bible as the 'New Creation'. The 'New Creation' could be perceived as a continuing process in which humankind works with God to restore a creation that is 'groaning' (Romans 8:22). Colossians 1:15–20 describes a Christ embodied in the wholeness of creation who brings reconciliation, or renewal, or restoration, to all creation, not just to humanity.

Irenaeus

In the second century AD the relationship between humankind, God and the cosmos was addressed by Irenaeus. In refuting Valentinian theology—which argued for the creation of the earth by a demiurge distinct from Jesus Christ, the son of God—Irenaeus, through a careful analysis of Genesis and the Gospels, demonstrated that the God who created the world was the God who became incarnate as Jesus Christ. He argued that the Word of God that created the world (Genesis 1) was the Word who 'became flesh and lived among us' (John 1:14). An emphasis on the sin and redemption model, which regarded creation merely as the theatre in which this drama was enacted, was replaced by a sense of the unity of the spiritual and temporal or material world.

Eastern Orthodoxy

Cosmic christology has therefore been part of Christianity from its earliest years. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, the connection between Christ and the cosmos has been retained continuously to the present time. The theology of the Eastern Orthodox tradition incorporates an intimate relationship between God and the entirety of creation, including

[7] Celia Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2016), 101.

Christ creating the sun, moon and stars, fresco, Suchevitsa Monastery, Romania, sixteenth century

humankind. This is reflected in liturgical texts used every evening, in which all creatures join in praise and thanksgiving. Deane-Drummond describes the Orthodox liturgy, by comparison with Western ones, as 'much more conscious of the participation by the whole of the created order in salvation history'.[8]

Humankind's role is seen as the link between God and creation, modelling that of the incarnate God—Christ—in his relationship to the world in which he lived. In the tradition of the Eastern Church, Christ has a central position within the liturgy as the symbol of the cosmos. The theological basis for this dates back to the writing of early Christian theologians. St Maximus the Confessor (*c.*580–662) wrote of the *Logos principal* within the cosmos. 'Logoi' are,

> … the patterns after the divine Logos or Word present in all created beings …. the principles and ideas in the sensory world as we know it in its different manifestations …. which ultimately express their source in the divine Logos.[9]

This cosmic theology, remaining part of the Eastern tradition, carries with it an obligation to care for all creation, to desist from damaging it.

The Franciscans

Franciscans saw and continue to see things similarly. Cosmic christology has been part of their tradition since its origin in the thirteenth century. Incarnation is seen as 'integral to the possibility of creation itself; one

[8] Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology*, 67.
[9] Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology*, 61.

is inconceivable without the other'.[10] Through the goodness and beauty of creation, Francis of Assisi (1181/2–1226) recognised God in all living things. In his 'Canticle of the Sun' he praised every part of an interconnected and interdependent creation.

Bonaventure (*c.*1221–1274) described an intimate connection between the triune God and creation. The Father is the source of goodness that is expressed in the Son, the Word, who realises creation, which is vivified through the Spirit.[11] Creation reflects the overflowing love and interrelatedness of the Father, Son and Spirit. Bonaventure used two images of creation: a mirror reflecting the power, wisdom and goodness of God, and a book in which the Creator finds expression.

John Duns Scotus (*c.*1266–1308) said that the incarnation would have happened even if humankind had not sinned. He too emphasized the close relationship between the incarnation and creation. For him, Christ is an expression of God's Word, and the one on whom creation is centred. He is, 'the meaning and model of creation and every creature is made in the image of Christ …. Every leaf, cloud, fruit, animal and person is an outward expression of the Word of God in love.' Ilia Delio writes, 'If the universe is the external embodiment of the Inner Word of God, there is something incarnational throughout the whole of creation'.[12]

The Cosmic Christ in Modernity

The understanding of a 'cosmic Christ' fell out of favour after the Middle Ages. Ernst Conradie argues that an emphasis on the human nature of God, the adoption of an anthropocentric christology in Western Christianity and the emergence in the sixteenth century of scientific thinking which was believed to be able to explain the functioning of the cosmos led to 'internal, existential notions of God in relation to the human subject'.[13] According to James Lyons, however, it emerged again in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in English, French and German literature.[14] More recently still, Celia Deane-Drummond notes:

[10] Delio, *Christ in Evolution*, 56.
[11] Delio, *Christ in Evolution*, 58.
[12] Delio, *Christ in Evolution*, 54, 76.
[13] Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology*, 212 note 4.
[14] Lyons, *Cosmic Christ*, 43.

> Lack of confidence in cosmological descriptions is also related to postmodern perspectives and the lack of confidence in any form of 'grand narrative' that has heavily influenced theological discourse in recent years.[15]

Teilhard de Chardin

The Jesuit palaeontologist and mystic Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) recognised a cosmic Christ present throughout creation as the origin and essence of the physical and spiritual world, infusing all things. The cosmos, he wrote, is a *milieu divin* which is increasingly revealing itself to humankind through evolution.[16] Teilhard wrote of evolution as a holy, purposive and orderly process in which the cosmos moves beyond material development towards an increasing complexity, spirituality and consciousness that he termed the 'noosphere'.[17] Humanity, being conscious of itself, is integral to this process of spiritual evolution, as it moves toward the final stage, the 'Omega point' or 'Christogenesis', revealing the loving centre and focus of energy which is the resurrected Christ.[18]

But Teilhard's complex cosmic christology was unacceptable to Roman Catholic theologians of the mid-twentieth century, who were focused on the biblical account of creation and the humanity of Christ. Moreover, the synthesis of a material and spiritual evolution that Teilhard described came too close to pantheism for some. He was removed from his teaching positions by the hierarchy and ordered to retract some of his statements. Scientists such as Peter Medawar noted the lack of evidence to support his supposedly scientific theory.[19] Teilhard's was in fact his own creative story of God and evolution. Nonetheless in the second half of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries some theologians find insights into christology in his writings.

Joseph Sittler

It was in an eloquent and powerful address to an ecumenical gathering at the World Council of Churches meeting in Delhi in 1961 that the

[15] Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology*, 212 note 4.
[16] See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Divin Milieu: An Essay on the Interior Life*, translated by Siôn Cowell (London: Collins, 1960).
[17] See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, translated by Bernard Wall (New York: Harper Perennial, 1965).
[18] See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 'The Christic', in *The Heart of Matter*, translated by René Hague (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, n.d.), 80–102.
[19] Peter B. Medawar, review of *The Phenomenon of Man*, *Mind*, 70 (January 1961), 99–106.

Lutheran pastor Joseph Sittler (1904–1987), influenced by Eastern Christianity, preached on the cosmic christology expressed in Colossians 1:15–20.[20] He re-emphasized the cosmic nature of Christ expressed in the passage. Christ is 'before all things'; all things (Greek: *ta panta*) exist 'through him' and 'for him'. He will redeem all things—all creation, not only humankind. 'A doctrine of redemption is meaningful only when it swings within the larger orbit of creation',[21] Sittler wrote.

He pointed to the dualism between the physical world of nature, and the spiritual world of grace which had entered Western Christian belief early in the first millennium and was persisting. Nature was deemed to be unclean. He recalled that for Irenaeus the incarnation and promise of grace were given to all nature and that nothing could be called unclean. According to Sittler, Western 'Enlightenment Man' had moved into the realm of nature, had appropriated it for himself and was damaging it. 'A bit of God died with every natural conquest', he wrote.[22] Sittler called for unity among those Christian denominations present to act in the face of the serious threat posed to the natural world by grace/nature dualism. This was a crisis, he argued, and crises provided an opportunity for traditional interpretations to change. He called on those present to unite to re-orientate Western Christianity around the 'cosmic Christ' of Colossians 1:15–20.

Twentieth Century, *by Richard Wynne Nevinson, 1932–1935*

Lynn White

Six years after Sittler preached his sermon, in 1967, in the

[20] Joseph A. Sittler, 'Called to Unity', *The Ecumenical Review*, 14 (1962), 177–187.
[21] Sittler, 'Called to Unity', 178.
[22] Sittler, 'Called to Unity', 181.

widely read magazine *Science*, Lynn White argued that 'ever since man became a numerous species he has affected his environment notably', pointing to the development of tools, millennia ago, which allowed humanity to alter that environment.[23] The Western world's rapid development of technological skills began to emerge in the twelfth century. The seventeenth-century 'Baconian creed' expressed humanity's ability, through science, to control the world, resulting in the appropriation, exploitation and domination of nature. This he blamed on Christianity's interpretation of the text of Genesis which allowed humankind to act in such destructive manner. Not surprisingly, White's intervention led to widespread theological discussion and debate concerning how humankind's role with respect to the earth, as handed down in Genesis, should be interpreted.

Celia Deane-Drummond

In her book *Eco-Theology*, Celia Deane-Drummond has undertaken a thorough exploration of how to understand Christ in the light of ecological concerns . She draws attention to the fact that in John 1:1–4 we learn that all things came into being through God, and 'in him was life'. While for many centuries the emphasis in Western Christianity has been on the humanity of Jesus, Deane-Drummond turns to John 1:14: 'the Word [Logos] became flesh and lived among us'. She interprets 'flesh' not simply as referring to the flesh of humanity, but as including all created things, writing that 'at the incarnation Christ, the creator, becomes one with all flesh, that is, exists in kinship with all created beings'.[24]

The conclusion must be that creation is sacred; and it is humankind's responsibility to protect and care for it. Other theologians, including Jürgen Moltmann, have addressed the meaning of the cosmic Christ in relation to humankind's role in and care for the cosmos.[25] Recently the Franciscan Richard Rohr has explored how such an understanding can 'revolutionize how we practice our faith in ways big and small'.[26] Such a christology demands that we care for God's sacred created world.

[23] Lynn White Jr, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis', *Science*, 155/3767 (10 March 1967), 1203–1207, here 1203.
[24] Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology*, 100.
[25] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, translated by Margeret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); and see Jeremy Law, 'Jürgen Moltmann's Ecological Hermeneutics', in *Ecological Hermeneutics*, 223–240.
[26] Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for and Believe* (London: SPCK, 2019), 106.

Prayer to the Cosmic Christ

In this context, the practice of prayer can be formal or informal, expressed in words or silent contemplation, entered into any time and everywhere. Gratitude to God can be found in caring for and delighting in nature, or in recognising humankind's God-given skills in creating a world that provides comfort for humankind. But this world does not offer comfort to all. In contemplating the tragedies that befall our fellow humans and the environment, we pray for insight into our individual and social roles and responsibilities in contributing to the betterment of the cosmos and its peoples.

One thing is certain: Christ, ever present throughout the cosmos, is attentive to our prayer. The question may well arise as to how prayer to the cosmic Christ is compatible with the insistence of the mystics that prayer should be personal, directed to the humanity of Christ. This is well expressed by Paul Mommaers, who asks, 'When all is said and done, does Christ in his majesty outshine Jesus in his very human form?'[27] Perhaps the answer can only be found in experience. In some mysterious way, prayer to the cosmic Christ can become, at the same time, personal to the human Christ. Otherwise we lose sight of the specificity of the incarnation, that is, God becoming this particular man: Jesus.

Ahilya Noone trained as a medical doctor and most recently practised in various public-health areas including the control of hospital-acquired infection in Scotland. She retired in 2006 and subsequently obtained an MA in theology and literature at Glasgow University. Like many others she is very concerned about the future of planet Earth and its peoples, especially the poorest. She has been particularly inspired by Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'* and the writings of Celia Deane-Drummond.

[27] Paul Mommaers, *The Riddle of the Christian Mystical Experience: The Role of the Humanity of Jesus* (Louvain: Peeters, 2002), 88.

St Beuno's

Jesuit Spirituality Centre

A place of peace, prayer and beauty in North Wales

Away in the loveable west,
On a pastoral forehead of Wales,
I was under a roof here, I was at rest

Gerard Manley Hopkins, Jesuit poet

St Beunos is a Jesuit retreat house offering the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, silent individually guided retreats and various themed retreats. We also provide courses and training in spiritual accompaniment.

For the full programme of retreats and courses, see *www.beunos.com*

Contact: The Secretary, St Beuno's, St Asaph, Denbighshire, N. Wales, LL17 0AS

Tel: +44 (0)1745 583444

secretary@beunos.com

COSMIC INTIMACY

Gem Yecla

THE IDEA OF COSMIC INTIMACY came to me in one of my prayer periods during a retreat. I was praying in the chapel when I felt a soft breeze caressing my arm and I spontaneously said to God, *God, I miss this. I miss the romance in our friendship, in our relationship. It has been a long time.* And God seemed to answer me: *But we have outgrown that; we are past that stage*. Right away I asked God, *And what do we have now?* God's reply seemed to be, *Cosmic intimacy!* Since then this phrase, 'cosmic intimacy', has stayed with me like a mantra.

I believe that cosmic intimacy is something that is innate to each one of us. Just as we are drawn to intimate relationship with our fellow human beings, we are also fashioned to engage in intimacy with the cosmos, 'for every reality of the universe is intimately present to every other reality of the universe and finds its fulfillment in mutual presence'.[1] The concept of intimacy, therefore, can be broadened to include our relationship with the entire cosmos. As Matthew Fox aptly says, 'We were made for something cosmic and will not fit peacefully into anything much smaller'.[2]

Cosmic intimacy has features of *panentheism*—'the view that all is contained within the divine, although God is also more than the world'—but it definitely does not advocate pantheism, in which 'there is no absolute distinction between God and the universe'.[3] The phrase aims to capture a person's deep and meaningful connection with the elements

This article is based on an essay written as part of the requirements for my master's degree in spiritual direction at the Jesuit College of Spirituality in Melbourne, Australia. I would like to thank my supervisor, Michael Smith SJ, for all his help. An earlier and longer version of the text was published in *Religious Life Asia*, 19/1 (January–March 2017).

[1] Thomas Berry, *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1988), 106, quoted in Judy Cannato, *Field of Compassion: How the New Cosmology Is Transforming Spiritual Life* (Notre Dame: Sorin, 2010), 34.
[2] Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1983), 72, also quoted in Cannato, *Field of Compassion*, 169.
[3] *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, edited by Ian McFarland and others (New York: Zondervan, 2011), 365, 367.

of the cosmos such as the stars, moon, sun and wind, as well as the mountains, trees, plants and birds, through the beauty, grandeur, playfulness and deep silence of nature. It is my belief that, in the process of communing with and contemplating these cosmic elements, we may connect deeply with God and be transformed in the depths of our being. For we cannot be touched by God and remain unchanged, if we are open and docile in spirit. Intuitively, we also discover a language that speaks of cosmic intimacy.

The same sexual energy that is present in human intimacy can also be harnessed and directed towards care for creation, which is really the end goal of cosmic intimacy. It is moving toward cosmic intimacy that will usher the human species into a more caring and protective attitude towards planet Earth. As Wendell Berry says, 'We have the world to live in on the condition that we will take good care of it. And to take good care of it we have to know it. And to know it and to be willing to take care of it, we have to love it.'[4]

Intimacy, Sexuality and Solitude

Diarmuid O'Murchu places sexuality at the root of human intimacy:

> In its foundational meaning, human sexuality constitutes: (a) an *archetypal creative force*, endowed with (b) *spiritualised energy*, and expressed primarily as a *power for relationship*. It is not about power *over*, but a power *with*—with other people, but also with other creatures and with creation in the totality of its earthly and cosmic existence. Our desire to relate, and our capacity to do so, [are] primordially a sexual endowment, always imbued with cosmic yearning.[5]

The way human beings relate to one another, and the joys and pains that go with it, awakens us and invites us to broaden our horizon and perspective to look beyond human connections and discover the world, the cosmos and all of creation around us.

Focusing on the complexity of human relationships, Stephanie Dowrick has explored the delicate balance between our needs for intimacy and for

[4] 'Wendell Berry, Poet and Prophet', interview with Bill Moyers, *Moyers and Company*, 4 October 2013, produced by Gail Ablow (New York: PBS, 2013), available at https://billmoyers.com/episode/wendell-berry-poet-prophet/, accessed 5 February 2020. I am grateful to Sr Ana Malapitan for sharing this quotation with me.

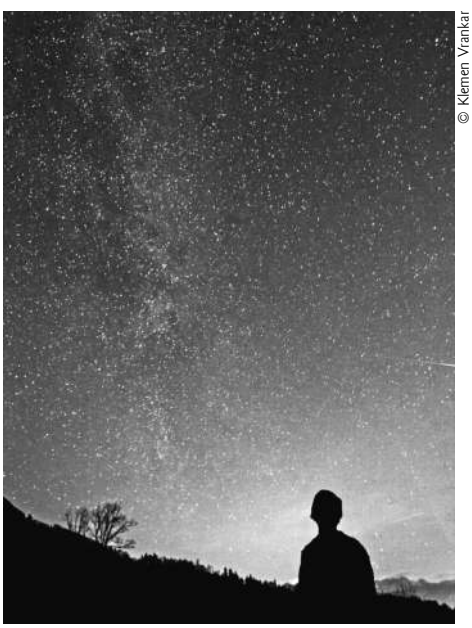
[5] Diarmuid O'Murchu, *The Transformation of Desire: How Desire Became Corrupted—And How We Can Rediscover and Reclaim It* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007), 106.

solitude, which can be a determining factor in a satisfying and rewarding relationship with ourselves and with our significant others. She says,

> Intimacy—closeness to yourself in times of solitude or closeness to others in moments of sharing and connecting—reflects your inner world as almost nothing else does. And intimacy begins from the inside; it begins with your own self.[6]

Harriet Lerner speaks of the dynamics of *pursuer* and *distancer* in human relationships. The more the one pursues, the more the other distances. When two people are too focused on a relationship, it becomes overloaded with unrealistic demands and expectations. Therefore, she recommends breaking the 'pursuit cycle' by shifting attention to the self, becoming aware of our own patterns of unhealthy relating and doing something about them instead of merely reacting to other people.[7]

The call to solitude, to be alone with ourselves and to be at home with this, is also a moment to be intimate with the moon and the stars and other cosmic elements. We take a break from our human partners and turn our gaze to the beauty and peace of creation which can silence the turmoil within. Hence, I believe that it is spiritually and psychologically healthy for us to widen our repertoire of intimacy by not limiting it to human relationships. It is good to recall that, 'More than a passing physical urge or a gender category, *sexuality* can be even more broadly understood as a unique form of *the energy of attraction that pulsates at the heart of the universe*'.[8]



[6] Stephanie Dowrick, *Intimacy and Solitude: Balancing Closeness and Independence* (London: Women's Press, 1992), 5.

[7] Harriet Lerner, *The Dance of Intimacy: A Woman's Guide to Courageous Acts of Change in Key Relationships* (New York: Harper, 1989), 40–41.

[8] Fran Ferder and John Heagle, *Tender Fires: The Spiritual Promise of Sexuality* (New York: Crossroad, 2002), 35.

Interconnectedness

Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme give a comprehensive story of the universe that covers 13.7 billion years from what they call the 'primordial Flaring Forth', or Big Bang, up to the present time. The interconnectedness of all things, animate and inanimate, organic and inorganic, is a prominent feature of this story. Scientists have discovered that the Flaring Forth, the event that precipitated the creation of the universe and everything in it, came from one source of energy and the same beginning. Therefore, everything is related and interconnected in its diversity.

> We cannot regard the dolphin and the first Flaring Forth as entirely separate events. The universe is a coherent whole, a seamless multileveled creative event. The graceful expansion of the original body is the life blood of all future bodies in the universe.[9]

As Berry and Swimme conclude:

> The story then of a single proton is, in the sense indicated, integral with the story of every other particle in the primeval fireball. To tell the full story of a single particle we must tell the story of the universe, for each particle is in some way intimately present to every other particle in the universe.[10]

Consequently, even if all creation, including the human species, has diversified in the long process of evolution, it shares the same atomic and molecular elements that came from the initial Flaring Forth. The materials that make up the stars, for instance, are the same elements that are found in our bodies. As Denis Edwards explains,

> We are a carbon-based form of life. The molecules of our bodies are composed of atoms of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, with small amounts of other elements. While the hydrogen atoms come from the early universe, the carbon, oxygen, and nitrogen all come from the stars. The story of the emergence of stars is a central part of the human story.[11]

Therefore, there is an affinity, a sense of relatedness, between the human being and the cosmos. And that is why, as the writer and spiritual

[9] Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era—Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 18.
[10] Swimme and Berry, *Universe Story*, 29.
[11] Dennis Edwards, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith* (New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 10.

director Judy Cannato points out, 'Early on, humankind experienced not only a fascination with the celestial bodies that fill the sky by day and by night, but they have known a sense of connection to them as well'.[12] She goes on to testify:

> I once heard a story from the Native American tradition of the belief that a human being could not reach maturity without making room within herself for the immensities of the universe. That is what watching the stars helps us to do. The universe reveals itself to us, and in the hearing, we are transformed. Radical amazement begins with offering hospitality to the cosmos, hearing her story and intertwining it with our own, and nurturing the most significant relationship we have, our relationship with life itself.[13]

Even in the dynamics of predator-prey relationship, which initially seem to be no more than a mechanism for the survival of the fittest, there is this underlying interconnectedness. Berry and Swimme emphasize:

> While it is true that the various members of the natural community nourish each other, and that the death of one is the life of the other, this is not ultimately an enmity, it is an intimacy. The total balance in this process is preserved. If there is a taking there is a giving. Without reciprocity the Earth could not survive.[14]

So, as we continue our journey with the planet, individually and collectively, it is worth remembering,

> We are born of the Earth Community and its infinite creativity and delight and adventure. Our natural state is intimacy within the encompassing community. Our natural genetic inheritance presents us with the possibility of forming deeply bonded relationships throughout all ten million species of life as well as throughout the nonliving components of the universe. Any ultimate separation from this larger and enveloping community is impossible, and any ideology that proposes that the universe is nothing but a collection of pre-consumer items is going to be maintained only at a terrible price.[15]

This underscores the reality of the interconnectedness of human beings with the rest of creation and the urgent need to sustain this bond.

[12] Judy Cannato, *Radical Amazement: Contemplative Lessons from Black Holes* (Notre Dame: Sorin, 2006), 19.
[13] Cannato, *Radical Amazement*, 26.
[14] Swimme and Berry, *Universe Story*, 244.
[15] Brian Swimme, *The Hidden Heart of Cosmos: Humanity and the New Story* (New York: Orbis, 1996), 34.

Laudato si'

The goal of cosmic intimacy is really to move the human species towards the care for creation that is such an urgent concern in today's world. It is therefore imperative to discern what is happening in the world and what the response of the Church may be.

Seeing the massive destruction that is taking place in our environment in different parts of the globe, Pope Francis issued his encyclical *Laudato si'*. Referring to planet Earth as our 'sister', he states:

> This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as lords and masters entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts … is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and all forms of life. (n. 2)

The Pope later adds, 'Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God' (n. 119). In his commentary on the encyclical, Anthony Kelly notes:

> The breadth of the horizon in which the encyclical is expressed reaches even to the very life of God: 'Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity' ….[16]

[16] Anthony Kelly, *Laudato si': An Integral Ecology and the Catholic Vision* (Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2016), 10.

Laudato si' gives a comprehensive analysis of the ecological imbalance in all corners of the world and issues an urgent call to change how we proceed in various aspects of our individual and collective lives: political, economic, social, spiritual, academic. It is clear that the problem is massive and it also requires a massive and long-term solution. And, perhaps, the most relevant question to ask is how and where we start.

Kelly offers such a starting point when he says:

> In the first place, a holistic vision will presume an appreciation of the planetary biosphere, and show the capacity to diagnose how it has been harmed by uncaring exploitation. But it is not enough if such outer, objective ecology is unrelated to the 'inner ecology' of culture. Without a conversion of mind and heart, in a both personal and social sense, there can be little hope for any turn-around in our relationship to the world of nature and the delicate interrelationships and synergies it discloses.[17]

This process of conversion must begin by opening ourselves to cosmic reality and the different forms of creation, and developing a sense of awe and reverence in their unique presence and existence.

Mysticism and Cosmic Consciousness

Evelyn Underhill

According to Diarmuid O'Murchu, mystics are 'rooted unambiguously in creation, and their fascination with the Holy One happens within the enveloping mystery of creation itself'. For him, 'Mysticism is about immersion in God's world at the service of God's creativity and liberation'. He quotes Evelyn Underhill, who identified five stages of mystical development: '(a) the awakening of the self to spiritual life; (b) purgation; (c) illumination; (d) the dark night of the soul; (e) union'.[18]

In the fifth and last of Underhill's stages, the mystic experiences a sense of being one with the God who is acting in him or her, called *deification*, but still maintains the capability consciously to will and think and act.[19] This union can be described as a profound intimacy with God, expressed by the image of matrimony. There is also a union between the lower self—the constant pull towards self-preservation—and the

[17] Kelly, *Laudato si'*, 16.
[18] O'Murchu, *Transformation of Desire*, 156–157; and see Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1912), 205–207.
[19] Underhill defines deification as 'the utter transmutation of the self in God' (*Mysticism*, 496).

higher self—the pull towards self-transcendence which calls for surrender to God, and to God's actions and movements in the life of the mystic. Union with God leads to a new fruitfulness of life in the service of God's people: 'The self, lifted to the divine order, is to be an agent of the divine fecundity: an energizing centre, a parent of transcendental life'.[20]

Mary Inglis

Underhill's mystical stage of union may be correlated with the analysis of consciousness in the work of the spiritual writer Mary Inglis. She proposes a model of the evolution of consciousness which explores the dynamics of the masculine and feminine principles or energies operating in our individual and collective psyches: the 'two creative forces in the universe which when working together create wholeness'.[21] She traces this evolution of consciousness in three stages: (1) a pre-conscious unified state of the masculine and feminine energies; (2) separation of the energies leading to autonomy but also to competitive and dualistic ways of looking at reality; (3) reunification of the feminine and masculine principles, which brings wholeness.

Terri MacKenzie reads Inglis in terms of 'cosmic consciousness', inviting us to look at her three stages in the wider context of 'the interplay between human consciousness and our relationship to the rest of creation—historically and/or personally'.[22] Inglis's first stage,

> … is characterized by an instinctive awareness of the essential unity and interdependence of all creation, and sees humanity as an integral part of nature rather than separate from it, with the resultant correspondence of human rhythms with those of natural worlds.[23]

In the second stage,

> The act of separating from this state of undifferentiated unity is usually the work of the masculine principle …. With this comes the birth of individual or self-consciousness, and the introduction of a polarized vision of the world in which there is a clear distinction between the self and the environment.[24]

[20] Underhill, *Mysticism*, 512.
[21] Mary Inglis, 'Journey to Wholeness: The Message in Myths', *One Earth*, 3/1 (1982), 8–10, here 8, quoted in Terri MacKenzie, 'Stages of Cosmic Consciousness', *Ecospirituality Resources* (20 October 2013), at https://ecospiritualityresources.com/tag/mary-inglis/, accessed 8 February 2020.
[22] MacKenzie, 'Stages of Cosmic Consciousness'.
[23] Inglis, 'Journey to Wholeness', 8.
[24] Inglis, 'Journey to Wholeness', 8.

MacKenzie characterizes this stage as bringing 'awareness of separate identities; exploration and deeper understanding of different components of creation; scientific belief that everything is atomic; dualities, dominance, competition'.[25] With regard to our history as humanity, Inglis states:

> The second [stage], emphasizing the development of the masculine principle, is what we have been exploring for the last four to six thousand years. The masculine principle has ruled as the dominant consciousness, analysing, classifying, ordering and controlling, seeing the world in terms of differences ….[26]

However, 'In this century … the long-dormant feminine principle is beginning to awaken and assert itself, preparing the way for the third stage, which points to the future'.[27]

> The way to [the] third level of experience and consciousness lies not in self-assertion or an act of will but rather in surrender—yielding, waiting, trusting and responding, *allowing* ourselves to be transformed rather than ourselves acting to bring about that transformation.[28]

Hence, the third stage,

> … involves a willingness for grace to be active in our lives, for there is an element in it in which we do not choose it; it chooses us, if we are ready and open. It does not mean the dissolution of the autonomous self and the release of our capacity to act, but rather it asks that we surrender also, so that our actions and autonomy may reflect and be in the service of a larger whole.[29]

Thus the person or community should be open and available to cooperate with God in God's ongoing process of creation in the world, concretised through the process of discernment. MacKenzie aptly describes this third stage of cosmic consciousness as the 'conscious return to unity and interdependence, fully honouring variety and complexity and their interconnectedness'.[30]

What I have called cosmic intimacy belongs to this third stage of 'conscious return to unity and interdependence'. It correlates with the sense of being one with God in surrender, the 'union' that the mystic

[25] MacKenzie, 'Stages of Cosmic Consciousness'.
[26] Inglis, 'Journey to Wholeness', 9.
[27] Inglis, 'Journey to Wholeness', 9.
[28] Inglis, 'Journey to Wholeness', 9.
[29] Inglis, 'Journey to Wholeness', 10.
[30] MacKenzie, 'Stages of Cosmic Consciousness'.

experiences according to Evelyn Underhill. A closer look at the lives of individual mystics reveals their experience of intimacy with the cosmos.

St Francis of Assisi

St Francis of Assisi is famous for his positive regard for creation, which is encapsulated in his well-known poem 'The Canticle of the Sun'. Fittingly, Pope Francis takes the title of *Laudato si'* ('Praise be') from this beautiful canticle. Alister McGrath notes that in his poem, 'Francis sets out a vision of the entire creation praising its creator' with an 'underlying theology of providence, in which the benefit of each aspect of creation for humanity is identified'. McGrath also draws attention to the 'most famous feature of the canticle … its use of the terms "brother" and "sister" to refer to various aspects of the created order'.[31] This, I believe is in itself a clear indication of St Francis's intimate relationship with the cosmos.

St Ignatius of Loyola

Nature also played a crucial role in the life of St Ignatius. According to William J. Wood, 'This is illustrated by his account of what he regarded as the most definitive of his mystical experiences, the one that occurred while he was out for a walk from Manresa and stopped to rest by the River Cardoner'.[32] In the *Autobiography*:

> Once he was going in his devotion to a church, which was a little more than a mile from Manresa (I think it is called St Paul's), and the way goes along by the river. Going along thus in his devotions, he sat down for a little with his face towards the river, which was running deep below. And as he was seated there, the eyes of his understanding began to be opened: not that he saw some vision, but understanding and knowing many things, spiritual things just as much as matters of faith and learning, and this with an enlightenment so strong that all things seemed new to him. One cannot set out the particular things he understood then, though they were many: only that he received a great clarity in his understanding, such that in the whole course of his life, right up to the sixty-two years he has completed, he does not think, gathering together all the helps he has had from God and all the things he has come to know (even if he joins them all into one), that he has ever attained so much as on that single occasion.[33]

[31] Alister McGrath, *The Christian Theology Reader* (Chichester: John Wiley, 2017), 357.
[32] William J. Wood, 'Conversation with the Cosmic Christ: The Spiritual Exercises from an Ecological Perspective', in *Embracing Earth: Catholic Approaches to Ecology*, edited by Albert Lachance and John Carroll (New York: Orbis, 1994), 177.
[33] *Autobiography*, n. 30.

It was through nature that God enlightened St Ignatius about the profound mysteries of faith. This had a very strong impact on him and remained with him throughout his life.

The Contemplation to Attain Love

St Ignatius, through his Spiritual Exercises, has given humanity a profound insight into our place in creation and creation's place in our lives, and the relationship between God, who is infinite, the giver and source of all, and the human person, who is finite, but loved and cherished in that finiteness. The Exercises culminate in the Contemplation to Attain Love which, according to Michael Ivens, 'presents in the form of a contemplative paradigm the spirituality of finding and loving God in all things which is the lasting outcome of the Exercises'.[34] The four points of the Contemplation highlight God's love for the human person manifested in words, and more so in deeds: 'That is to say, in and through his gifts we meet God as *bestowing* his gifts, *present* in his gifts, *working* in his gifts, *source* of his gifts'.[35] By 'gifts' are meant everything that we have received from God, including our very selves, the people who are significant to us, our personal history and all of creation.

Finite, but loved and cherished in that finiteness

Michael Buckley states:

> The preludes of the Contemplation involve all three unities of love: the internal integrity of affectivity and action; the interpersonal integrity of friendship and communion; the universal integrity of all creation, moving out of God and returning to him in friendship.[36]

He later affirms, 'God is at work within the universe, within all things. It becomes religiously imperative that a man discover and read these labours, that he merge his choices and his actions with the workings of God'.[37] This is only possible when we are intimate with the cosmos—if we take the time to contemplate the sky, the clouds, the moon, the stars.

[34] Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 169.
[35] Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 170–171.
[36] Michael Buckley, 'The Contemplation to Attain Love', *The Way Supplement*, 24 (1975), 92–104, here 100.
[37] Buckley, 'Contemplation to Attain Love', 102.

My Personal Experience

Although the phrase 'cosmic intimacy' occurred to me very recently, my experience is that God has drawn me into this relationship since I was a child. This came very naturally to me. I felt myself connecting with a star as a friend, whom I called Estrelita—a Filipino word which literally means 'little star'. I would converse with her about anything in the same way that I would talk to other friends of my age (six or seven years old).

Following Inglis's model of cosmic consciousness, this experience shows that I had moved from first stage, of 'unconscious, undifferentiated, pre-conscious oneness' to the second stage, of 'awareness of separate identities'. Estrelita and I were two separate beings. I cannot remember now when I stopped talking to Estrelita. Most likely it was when I started to become more cognitive, with a very left-brained academic training geared towards the analytical, rational and competitive attitude which is characteristic of the second level of the cosmic consciousness model.

Long afterwards, a year after my father died, my mother was hospitalised on Christmas Eve and I was alone with her in her room. I did not realise that the situation would have such a strong negative impact on me. It made me depressed: no one and nothing seemed to be able to lift me out of my sadness and the feeling of aloneness. I attended the Christmas Eve Mass but I did not stay, as I could not stop myself from crying. I went back to the hospital and I found myself looking down from the veranda of the tenth floor. For the first time, I realised and understood why people might jump off buildings and commit suicide. I was in that space for a brief moment; the thought made me shudder.

As I was lying down in bed that night, still feeling very down, I saw a star, a small one, from my window. Suddenly, I thought of the three Wise Men being guided by the star to Bethlehem to visit the newborn baby. That night, that star brought me back to Jesus, who was born anew in my heart. Indeed, it was Christmas! My star-friend, Estrelita, came back to me that evening at one of the lowest points of my life, teaching me to yield and to surrender to the situation at hand and to discover wisdom there.

I had many moments for solitude when I was studying in Melbourne, moments which I consider truly graced. I had lots of opportunities to

commune deeply with the moon and the darkness at night when I took my evening walks. Perhaps the darkness helped me to enter into the ambiguity I experience from being in a foreign land. I bathed in the rays of the sun on a refreshing winter morning. I hugged my favourite tree and asked for wisdom as I wrote my essays. I lay down on the grassy open field and allow the solid ground to massage my back as I looked at the graceful and slow-moving clouds above me. Creation has been my companion most of the time and it has been a very gracious and generous one.

On one occasion, I was very tired after working for several days to finish a paper. On the day of submission, I finally put the last finishing touches and e-mailed it to my professor, who lives in Spain, at 1:30 in the morning. I had a desire and, perhaps, need to be hugged—but everyone was asleep. And so I went to bed without a human hug. When I woke up the following morning, I saw from my window a deep pink sky, and so I ran to the park to have a full view of the sunrise. Lo and behold, everything around me was pink and orange and I realised that God was giving me a cosmic embrace.

I connect deeply with Judy Cannato's writing, and I find in her a kindred spirit:

> A life of radical amazement suggests that we live at a slower pace. We spend time doing 'nothing'. Learning to sit still, we become aware of all that surrounds us. We pay attention to singing birds and playing children. We notice clouds and the signs of changing seasons.

> We become friends with trees and neighbors. We begin to relax, and tension starts to melt away as we tune in to the energies of Earth. Slowing down, we notice interior movements. Feelings surface, and sometimes they are not pleasant ones, but as we listen to their message and bring the healing energy of the Spirit through Earth, we hear their message and acknowledge the benefit of being in touch with our truth, even if it is painful.[38]

Even while I was writing this essay, I found myself doubting if cosmic intimacy is possible, if it is real and if it works. I was filled with uncertainty and I was blocked. Nothing was coming to me, no ideas, and I was stuck. I was also distracted by having had no response from a friend with whom I had shared my homesickness and loneliness. I found myself crying in front of my desk. While wiping my tears, I happened to look out of the window and saw five fluffy white clouds in a row against the blue backdrop of the sky; they seemed to be saying to me, *We love you, Gem. And we are here for you.* I asked myself if I was imagining things. But then I remembered how St Ignatius put value on the role of imagination in prayer and so I honoured what I seemed to hear. I opened my laptop and started writing while telling the clouds, *In response to your love, I will continue to work on this essay on cosmic intimacy.* To my great surprise and joy, ideas just started to flow and, in no time, I finished the section on which I was working.

I realised, too, that I had been overloading my friend and our friendship with unrealistic demands. I was focusing so much on my need for human intimacy and connection that I had become oblivious to creation and the cosmic elements that surround me. But those clouds called my attention and beckoned me to shift my focus, and a breakthrough followed. It was a very liberating experience to be freed of neediness and self-absorption, and to be able to let go, surrendering to the vastness of the universe before me.

A Change of Consciousness

From my reading and from my own personal experience, I have come to conclude that cosmic intimacy is real and possible. It is available to us because it is our birthright as members of the 'Earth community'. In our human relationships, it transforms us and teaches us to be patient.

[38] Cannato, *Radical Amazement*, 142–143.

We learn the art of waiting from nature, for it has its own slow and unpredictable rhythm and pace. We cannot dictate; we can only wait and surrender, and receive in gratitude what is given to us. There are times when we are invited to assume the same attitude in our relationships with our significant others. And since the cosmos is vast and expansive, it also evokes in us a sense of magnanimity. It widens our horizon as well as our understanding which includes our intimate human relationships.

The same ultimately sexual energy that enables us to engage with human intimacy can be directed towards care for creation. At the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila, Philippines, where I used to coordinate the sabbatical programme, we teach a module on ecospirituality, and also one on sexuality. Although the ecospirituality module is very relevant and well delivered, many of the participants cannot relate to it. However, when we run the module on sexuality, it is always well received across all ages. It is my conviction that cosmic intimacy is precisely the link between sexuality and ecospirituality. We can begin to care for creation if we have a relationship with it. This is not something alien to us because we started out that way: we were one with the natural world as children. It is a matter of going back where we came from and seeing it for the first time.

We can begin to care for creation if we have a relationship with it

The mystics experience this and I am deeply convinced that there is a mystic in each one of us. However, we need to be purposeful and deliberate in our efforts to enter into it, especially in a world that is full of distractions and allurements toward materialism and consumerism. Judy Cannato says:

> Our ability to be aware, to be attentive, to see and to hear, to feel and to intuit—all come more fully alive when they flow out of a quiet, receptive heart. And so our participation in ongoing creation is predicated on our commitment to silence—to cultivating a listening heart and a peaceful spirit.[39]

Our capacity to connect deeply with the cosmos enhances our experience of the divine, for creation radiates and reflects God's presence to us. Therefore, cosmic intimacy is a way to deepen our prayer and intensify our connection with God. The silence that is innate in nature reaches out

[39] Cannato, *Radical Amazement*, 141.

to the depths of our being and draws us into stillness before God. The beauty and grandeur that abound in creation place us in an attitude of prayer and fill our hearts with a sense of gratitude, if only we render ourselves open and ready to receive. Even the wrath of nature, in the form of typhoons, earthquakes and other calamities sends us down on our knees, imploring God to spare us and, at the same, seeking refuge only in God.

The idea of cosmic intimacy challenges us to ask many questions: how do we communicate this with other people, especially those who are deeply entrenched in the materialistic and consumerist world that we inhabit? How do we live it out given our own context, personality and temperament? How do we teach this to our children at home and in school? As we reflect and explore the answers to these questions, I suggest that we bear in mind the powerful and insightful words of Dennis Edwards:

> As called to cultivate and take care of creation, human beings are part of the unfolding creation, called to participate responsibly in the dynamism of ongoing creation. We are intimately linked to the life-forms of our planet, and to the atmosphere, the soil, and the oceans. Our existence is encompassed by the mystery of God revealed in all the variety of creatures that surround us. We are part of them and they are part of us. All of us together reflect the limitless divine love that is our origin. We are born of the universe, made from stardust, part of the evolutionary history of life on Earth and, as such, made in the image of God and kin to all of the wonderfully diverse plants, insects, birds, and animals of our beautiful planet, and called to cultivate and care for the Earth and all its creatures.[40]

As members of the Earth community, we must hope that there will be a change of consciousness in each of us as we learn to relate more with the cosmos and enter into intimacy with it. Brian Swimme states:

> Through repetition and through years of deepening, our children or our children's children will be provided a way to escape the lures of so much deceit, and greed, and hatred, and self-doubt, for they will begin each morning and live each day inside the simple truth: a gorgeous living Earth drifts light as a feather around the great roaring generosity of the Sun.[41]

[40] Edwards, *Ecology*, 26.
[41] Swimme, *Hidden Heart*, 44.

I used to be intimidated by the massive and almost impossible task of restoring ecological balance in my country and in the world. However, Judy Cannato's words below have inspired me to continue to dream and to do something, even just to write this essay, with the desire to care for this home, the one and only home planet, that we live in.

> We tend to believe that most of us cannot and do not make much of a difference in the great scheme of things. The reality is that, noticed or not, every conscious act that gives witness to new possibilities and greater awareness contributes to the transformation of the whole. There is no insignificant thought, word, or action. Each act of courage and strength shifts the energy and increases the potential for others to become aware, too. No matter what we do, we are always affecting the energy around us, either in a negative or positive way.[42]

Gem Yecla works in spiritual direction at the East Asian Pastoral Institute, San José Seminary and Asian Theological Seminary in the Philippines. She holds a mastership in spiritual direction from the Jesuit College of Spirituality in Melbourne, Australia.

[42] Cannato, *Field of Compassion*, 6.

DARK MATTER TO BRIGHT FAITH

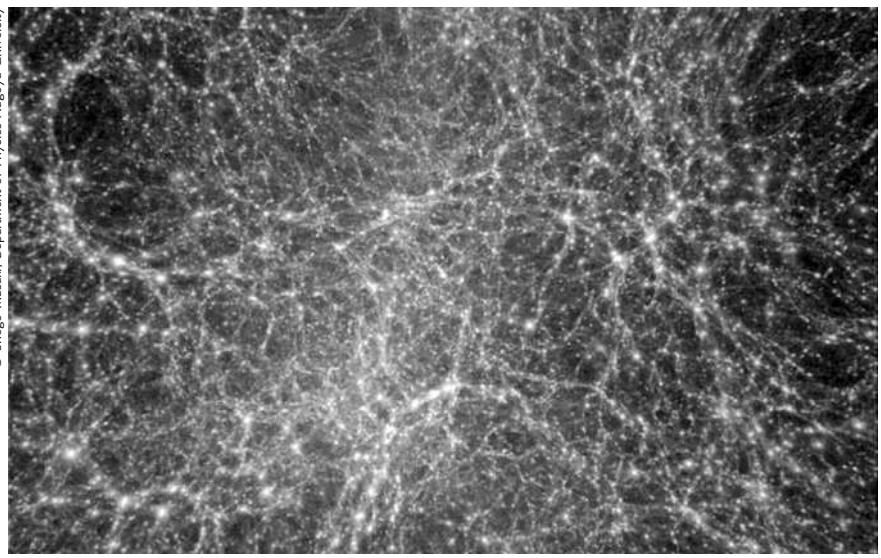
Paolo Beltrame

DARK MATTER is a mysterious form of matter, yet to be directly observed, that constitutes 85 per cent of the mass of the known universe. Its existence is affirmed by its gravitational effects, even if it is very difficult to detect it and to understand its nature. It is called 'dark' because it does not undergo electromagnetic interactions with any other particles, and it is such electromagnetic interactions that allow objects to be observed, not necessarily with our eyes, but via experiment.

Fritz Zwicky (a remarkable and interesting Swiss astronomer) first postulated its existence in the early 1930s. After observing the motion of clusters of up to thousands of galaxies, he named this 'invisible' substance, *dunkle Materie* (German for 'dark matter'). Since Zwicky's time, numerous phenomena have been observed that cannot be explained without assuming the presence of dark matter. One of the most compelling came via the Planck artificial satellite in 2013, when it provided the most precise mapping to date of the cosmic microwave background.

Assuming that dark matter exists and that it is a new kind of particle, it was probably 'created' during the first instants of our universe, about 10^{-9} second (0.0000000001 second) after the Big Bang. Therefore, studying it represents a unique way of exploring God's unparalleled creativity and of shedding light on how God has been designing this universe, what the universe is and how it evolves. Current theories suggest that *all* galaxies were shaped by this dark matter, including our own, in which life has found a hospitable home.

Ignatian spirituality invites us to find God in all things, and so God is surely also in dark matter. The point is not to 'baptize' or to assign metaphysical (or even moral) meaning to this elusive form of matter, but



Computer simulation of the distribution of dark matter in the universe

serenely and profoundly to realise that everything that God has created, continues to create and will create, is there to be potentially embraced in our life. Furthermore, God demands that we discover God's design, both in the depths of the universe and in our own small, but unique and precious, lives. However, faith and scientific endeavour have often been held in tension with one another. So how do they interact in an individual's life—how can one be a person of faith and a person of science?

In some minimal sense, all scientists are 'faithful': there is no scientific reason why the universe should be intelligible to us and describable by mathematical formulae. And so scientists found their studies on an 'act of faith' that our cosmos is rational, and thus get their results accordingly. In a certain sense, every scientist is a 'believer' and therefore can, through his or her work, find a possible way to glimpse the mind of God—a God who is a creating and ordering supreme intelligence.

This does not mean that to be a religious believer you simply need to be a scientist … and it is obviously not true the other way around, either. The delicate point is that faith in a personal and loving God, who became human for the love of us, can be quite hard for a scientist. My faith in this paradoxical Christian God was possible only after a real experience, a tender, surprising and personal encounter with the divine—an event that did not prompt me to seek a solution or explanation but

rather invited me to an insistent renewal of that encounter, in order to allow God to find me endlessly.

Starting from this encounter, the whole human person flourishes, including his or her intellectual and scientific activities, which can then be experienced with new colours: they become an enriching and challenging dialogue with God who tells us: *Understand what you are observing! Discover new natural phenomena! I made you intelligent enough to achieve that!* Perhaps we could see God as the author of a detective story: God will be much happier if we keep reading, understanding and savouring the novel, entering the mystery of it until the last page, rather than being trapped in an incomplete picture by a short-sighted, narrow attitude. Georges Lemaître, who first proposed the theory of the Big Bang as the beginning of this universe, and who was also a Catholic priest, though that there are two paths to truth, religion and science; and, he said, 'I decided to follow them both'.[1]

Scientists nowadays are disclosing a God who is more God-like than ever. The cosmos has expanded from just our solar system to the scale of hundreds of billions of galaxies, and God is even bigger than that. The creative action has been moved from a six-day narrative into almost 14 billion years of evolutionary process, and God has even more imagination than that. With a spiritual perspective, one can perceive that the whole cosmic process is sustained with a profound and delicate loving care, which does not coerce nature, but embraces and respects it.

This perspective is the grounding of both my Jesuit life and my research. It is pivotal for a Jesuit to nurture a personal and honest relationship with God that frees him from service to his own passions, ambitions and sometimes even skills in order to have his whole self integrated into the service of others. Physics, or any scientific research, can be a unique tool for building bridges to a wider community, who might think of science as 'the religion of the future'. The true freedom to which a Jesuit aspires also requires the capacity to learn from others, as scientists constantly do.

Curiosity should be at the core of every good Christian life, and of Jesuits in a special way—you cannot seek God in everything if you do not dare to look with an open and 'soundly curious' mind. And, of

[1] See Duncan Aikman, 'Lemaitre Follows Two Paths to Truth: The Famous Physicist, Who Is Also a Priest, Tells Why He Finds No Conflict between Science and Religion', *The New York Times Magazine* (19 February 1933), 3, 18, here 18.

course, curiosity is also crucial in a scientist. Sincere curiosity also entails a compassionate approach towards the realities of all people, and therefore a desire to make the Kingdom of God flourish.

Faith embraces the totality of one's life—from its most inner and intimate aspects to the most social and global of actions. Scientific interest, therefore, can find a comfortable home within a life of faith, as it has in mine.

Paolo Beltrame SJ spent fifteen years investigating the dark matter content of our universe, working in various international research centres (including CERN, UCLA, the Weizmann Institute in Israel and the University of Edinburgh). He is now studying theology at the Centre Sèvres in Paris.

'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD'

How Religion Proclaims What Science Worships

Kensy Joseph

HAVING FALLEN INTO TROUBLE at the synagogue in Thessalonica, St Paul is sent to Athens to wait for his companions, Silas and Timothy, to join him (Acts 17:1–15). While there, he starts to reason with the various groups of people he encounters: Jews, Greeks, Epicurean and Stoic philosophers and so on. Eventually, he is taken to a meeting of city elders at the Areopagus (Mount of Ares), where he begins a public address:

> Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god' [Greek: *agnostos theos*]. What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. (Acts 17:22–23)

He then goes on to quote the philosophers Epimenides and Aratus as he proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Athenians (Acts 17:24–31).

This masterfully constructed speech has been called the climax to the Acts of the Apostles. It has also long been recognised by the Church as a model of mission.[1] Writing of the Church's missionary mandate today, Pope St John Paul II said:

> We must also mention the immense 'Areopagus' of culture, scientific research, and international relations which promote dialogue and open up new possibilities. We would do well to be attentive to these modern areas of activity and to be involved in them. People sense that they are, as it were, travelling together across life's sea, and that they are called to ever greater unity and solidarity.[2]

[1] See the Second Vatican Council's decree on the mission activity of the Church, *Ad gentes*, n. 3.
[2] John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, n. 37.

But the Areopagus of science today is often seen as one hostile to the faith, thanks in part to the commercial success of the 'New Atheists'. The movement known as New Atheism came to public attention in 2006–2007 when critiques of religion were published by the biologist Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*), neuroscientist Sam Harris (*Letter to a Christian Nation*), philosopher Daniel Dennett (*Breaking the Spell*) and writer Christopher Hitchens (*God Is Not Great*). Together, they were nicknamed the 'Four Horsemen of New Atheism'. *The God Delusion* has sold over 3 million copies worldwide, been translated into 35 languages and had a special tenth anniversary edition republished. Faith has come to be seen by many as, in Dawkins's words, a 'virus of the mind'.[3]

How, then, is a modern day St Paul to proclaim the Good News with respect to science? To do this, he would have to locate the *agnostos theos* of the scientist. In place of Epimenides and Aratus, he would need to familiarise himself with the work of contemporary philosophers of science. The popular view of science is that it has four characteristics:

1. Science does not start with preconceptions.
2. Science starts with evidence and scientists build theories based on this.
3. Evidence is obtained from observation and/or experimentation. This evidence is treated as fact.
4. Theories are proved or disproved according to whether they correspond to the facts or not.

This view was crystallized in the positivist philosophical movement of the nineteenth century, especially with the work of Auguste Comte (1798–1857).

However, writing a century earlier, the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711–1776) pointed out that this kind of evidence-based reasoning (called inductive reasoning) is not rationally justified. Our observations and experiences only reveal the tiniest fraction of all possible experiences; and there is no reason to think that the future must be like the past. We cannot even rely on the past experience of making predictions that have been verified.

[3] See Richard Dawkins, 'Viruses of the Mind', in *Dennett and His Critics: Demystifying Mind*, edited by Bo Dahlbom (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 13–27,

Taking up Hume's baton, the Austrian philosopher Karl Popper (1902–1994) argued that no scientific theory can ever be proved—it can only be falsified. Every scientific theory is tentative; a counter-observation may always be found. (This is, in fact, the most popular view among scientists today—which would put them at odds with their nineteenth-century counterparts.)

There came a further attack on the popular view of science in the 1960s, when Thomas Kuhn (1922–1996) and Paul Feyerabend (1924–1994) challenged the idea that science makes steady, incremental progress. Kuhn showed how the development of science occurs through 'paradigm shifts', periods of uncertainty when even fundamental presuppositions are challenged. Two good examples of this in the last century were Einstein's theory of relativity and quantum theory. Relativity challenged the idea that time and space were absolutes, while quantum theory challenged the notion that observation does not affect the system being studied. One of the features of a paradigm shift is that advocates of different paradigms disagree not only about the theories, but even about the evidence that underpins them. There is no such thing as a 'fact'—all data is theory-laden.

Feyerabend was even more revolutionary. Scientific progress, he said, is 'anarchic'—it involves actively 'breaking the rules' of good science. For instance, one may posit a theory that runs counter to the evidence, or simultaneously postulate contradictory hypotheses. Even political interference (usually the bane of academics) can lead to scientific progress. An example here is the politically motivated research in herbal medicine in China after 1954.

All of this has led to the current stance of non-foundationalism in the philosophy of science: what makes science 'scientific' is not reliance on evidence or observation or experimentation, but rather adherence to a 'tradition' of good practice and virtues such as curiosity, integrity, cooperation and transparency. But the same could be said of any academic field at all, or indeed, ordinary life. This points to a fundamental tension at the heart of science: the scientific enterprise seeks to study the inner workings of nature; but that enterprise defines itself according to principles that lie outside of the parameters of its study. The *agnostos theos* of science, then, is an alignment of scientific reason with order in the universe.

Perhaps it is here that a present day St Paul could proclaim the gospel. In the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI:

> Christian philosophy and theology, [have the] notion of participated being, in which each individual creature, possessed of its proper perfection, also shares in a specific nature and this within an ordered cosmos originating in God's creative Word [Greek: *Logos*]. It is precisely this inbuilt 'logical' and 'analogical' organization of nature that encourages scientific research and draws the human mind to discover the horizontal co-participation between beings and the transcendental participation by the First Being.[4]

Kensy Joseph SJ is the chaplain of St Aloysius College in Glasgow. He holds a BTech in computer science and engineering, and MAs in philosophy and theology.

[4] Benedict XVI, address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 8 November 2012.

Thinking Faith

A SCIENTIST FINDING GOD

Michael Smith

PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN would have been puzzled if anyone had suggested a problem with linking faith and science—they both provide a coherent model of the reality we see, the former perhaps more complete than the latter. Teilhard's life's work was in palaeontology and geology. He spent many years examining the fossils found in various geological layers, mainly in China. As each layer could be approximately dated, he could trace the evolution of the various phyla in the animal kingdom over time.

Not many years before he did this work, two scientists had altered the way we view the cosmos. In 1859, Charles Darwin, in *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, had shown how natural selection could refine random variations in the reproductive process to produce organisms of increasing complexity, exploiting more fully the habitats they lived in, leading eventually to humans. In 1929, Edwin Hubble analysed the red shifts of various galaxies, and showed that the universe is expanding from a single point and evolving from that point into the complex and varied universe we know today. In fact, a Catholic priest, Georges Lemaître, had mooted this possibility a few years before, but lacked the observations needed to establish it.

Teilhard's work on the fossil record showed how, over the millennia of biological time, living organisms had indeed evolved as evolutionary theory predicted, progressing always towards greater complexity and a closer adaptation to their environment; until one phylum—the primates—evolved into organisms which were reflective, of which one species has survived until today. But, although both are based on observed data and the production of models that systematize these observations, there are crucial differences between evolutionary theory as commonly understood today and the evolution that Teilhard described.

The Way, 59/2 (April 2020), 55–58

His understanding of evolution began right at the start, at the moment of the Big Bang. From the fundamental particles from which the universe began, through the atoms and molecules, minerals, primitive living cells, plants, animals and humans, it continues into the future, until the moment at which creation reaches its fulfilment, which will be the time when Christ returns. Teilhard detected a positive drive towards increasing complexity in this evolutionary process. Contemporary biologists reject the idea that evolution is 'going anywhere'; it is based entirely on random genetic variations—a stochastic process making 'progress' only through the survival of those species best adapted to their environment. But for Teilhard, this drive towards increasing complexity continues into the future until evolution reaches what he calls the 'Omega Point'.[1]

Central to Teilhard's understanding of evolution is what he calls 'the law of complexity-consciousness'. Consciousness is present in every being, becoming more significant with increasing complexity, though in simpler molecules and organisms it cannot actually be detected. Eventually in the evolution of the primates, a radical change occurred, and the consciousness became reflective—humans are aware of our own consciousness, and we became what we usually describe as 'thinking beings'.

Two important developments flow from this.

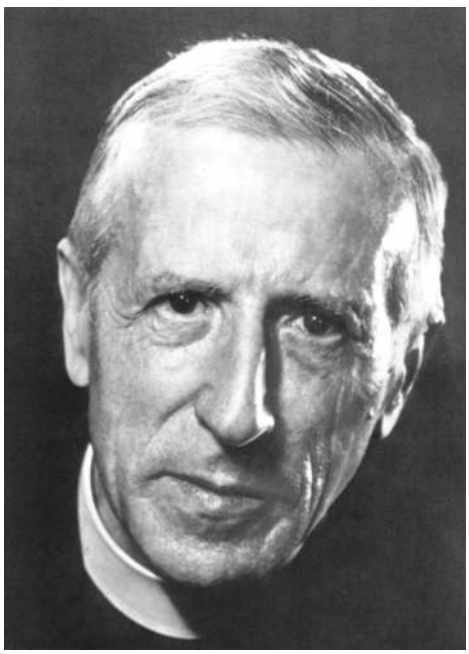
First, reflective beings begin to link up with each other, forming a new sphere (following on from minerals in the lithosphere, and living things in the biosphere), which Teilhard called the *noosphere*. The reflective beings in the noosphere communicate with each other, and grow in increasing cooperation and unity. It is clear that this has still some way to go, as the cosmos continues to develop towards its final destiny.

The second development from our transition into reflective beings within the noosphere is that we are now becoming able to control evolution, including our own. As well as an ability to control our environment to limit further evolutionary changes—such as by providing adequate food, medical care and education—we are developing the potential to intervene in evolution directly through such processes as gene editing. Sadly, we are also using our power to control evolution to degrade and contaminate our environment.

[1] See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, translated by Bernard Wall (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008 [1959]), especially 257 following.

Teilhard's model takes the idea that evolution is driving towards an end point even further. He argues that the process of creative union—the constant evolution towards greater complexity and consciousness—is God's chosen way of creating the universe. This was not an original idea of Teilhard's; under the name 'creative evolution' it had been described before—but he brings it to the fore as the way in which God is creating, from the first moments until the final coming of Christ, when the cosmos is brought to perfection. Creation is not, therefore, a past event which took place at the beginning of time, but a continuing process and, moreover, one in which we are all involved. We are reflective beings who can manage the process of evolution, so we are co-creators with God, and we now have a responsibility to help to bring everything to the final perfection that God intends. But, of course, as sinful beings we can refuse to work for this; we can disrupt the progress that others are making.

He also broadens the narrowly scientific models by showing that, in the noosphere, Christ is present. In the Nicene Creed we assert that 'all things were made' through Jesus Christ—Teilhard developed this idea, showing that the Omega Point towards which evolution is making progress is identical with the presence of Christ in creation. Tentatively, he wonders whether this could even be a third nature of Christ—truly God, truly human and truly matter (matter, for Teilhard, being a revelation of God).



Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in 1955

Teilhard died in 1955, and concerns about what we are doing to our environment had not yet come to the fore. But the importance of his insights is that the data on which science is built also support a model of the evolution of the universe that makes clear God's role in still-continuing creation. And Teilhard's work is also relevant to Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'* (2015), in which the Pope develops the idea of an integral

ecology, which includes not just the environment but also how we are using our resources, and how economic systems impact on the people of the world. We—the noosphere—are developing economic systems that can enhance or severely damage our life together in the world, and we all, as co-creators with God of the cosmos, can enhance or severely damage—even destroy—the world we live in.

Michael Smith SJ is a physics graduate, now working for the Jesuit Refugee Service and in adult education. He is currently exploring the place of God in creation—including in the social structures in the world.

COSMICISM

An Emerging Pneumatic Mystagogy

Jojo M. Fung

IN THE ANTHROPOCENE AGE, whose unprecedented surge in human activity has inflicted inconceivable damage on the Earth, there is a need to articulate a mystagogy to supplement and complement scientific and ethical narratives. Amidst the damage, there can also be a surge of hope as we stand beneath the night sky, filled with awe and gratitude, and praising God's gratuitous gift, staring deep into infinite space. The NASA New Horizons mission has already ventured into the furthest reaches of our solar system, flying past Pluto and the trans-Neptunian Kuiper Belt object 2014 MU69, also known as Ultima Thule—a deep-space asteroid that scientists believe is possibly as old as our solar system. Projects such as this bring a realisation that there must be life 'out there' in the cosmos. We are not alone in God's expansive creation. In this mystical moment, there is an awakening awareness that each finite human is being constituted and sustained by the power of the Spirit of God, *ruach Elohim* in the Old Testament creation narrative, indwelling in creation over the last fourteen billion years.[1] Each human being placed on this Earth is the self-reflectivity of the vast cosmos.

This awareness spurs the human imagination to contemplate the cosmic web of universe-interdependent life in creation, and generates an emerging discourse on the cosmic common good, which attends to the intrinsic and instrumental goodness of creatures to each other, of the cosmos as a whole and of creation as whole, for the glorification of God.[2] Such a creational perspective calls for the articulation of a cosmic spirituality: *cosmicism*.[3] Cosmicism lends hope to the concerted attempt to translate the cosmic common good into care for the sustainable

[1] For more on *ruach Elohim*, see Jojo M. Fung, *A Shamanic Pneumatology in a Mystical Age of Sacred Sustainability: The Spirit of the Sacred Earth* (Cham: Springer, 2017), 114–115.

[2] See Daniel P. Scheid, 'Conclusion', in *The Cosmic Common Ground: Religious Grounds for Ecological Ethics* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), 60.

[3] I first used this term in my book *Creation Is Spirited and Sacred: An Asian Indigenous Mysticism of Sacred Sustainability* (Manila: CCFI, JesCom and ISA, 2017), see x, 2, 7, 8, 22, 115–116, 118, 123.

future of our common home after *Laudato si'*. It shares an affinity with the 'contemplative ecology' proposed by John McCarthy:

> Our technical, and indeed, legal narrative needs to be accompanied by a symbolic-laden discourse that speaks to our fullest experience of the natural world. This symbolic language is best articulated using a religious, spiritual, or sacred discourse if we are to muster the needed social energy to engage the ecological age.[4]

The Rationale for Cosmicism

Indigenous Everyday Mysticism

What I have called cosmicism emerges out of more than a decade of sustained reflection on the lived experience of indigenous peoples' everyday mysticism. This mysticism sees the natural world as sacred, owing to the indwelling presence of the Creator and of the ancestral and nature spirits. As Adelson A. dos Santos writes: 'Indigenous spirituality is strongly marked by cosmological mysticism …. Cosmos, nature, community and the sense of interdependence with all beings are fundamental characteristics of these traditions'.[5] They enable shamans and healers to be intimate with the Creator and with nature.

Shamans blessing Pope Francis before his visit to Peru in 2018

[4] John McCarthy and Nancy C. Tuchman, 'How We Speak of Nature: A Plea for a Discourse of Depth', *Heythrop Journal*, 59/6 (November 2018), 944–958, here 945.

[5] Adelson A. dos Santos, 'Amazonian Indigenous Spirituality and Care for the Common Home', *La Civiltà Cattolica* (13 August 2019), 37–46, here 40.

When we discerningly correlate this indigenous belief with *ruach Elohim* indwelling in all created beings and life on Earth, it is safe to conclude that the life-sustaining ancestral and nature spirits participate in the power of God's Spirit. This participation is the pneumatic basis for the mystical-sapiential conviction of respected elders in indigenous communities that the natural world is sacred and enspirited. Cosmicism is premised on this conviction, as affirmed by Genesis 1:2 (*'ruach Elohim … meraphehet 'al'*: 'a wind from God swept over the face of the waters'), which explains how *ruach Elohim* powers forth-forward and sustains God's creation.

Sacred Encounter

The foundational rationale of cosmicism is to facilitate the sacred encounter of believers with *ruach Elohim*, whose Spirit power transforms them into co-creators with the triune God, in a manner most insightfully expressed by Teilhard de Chardin:

> In action I adhere to the creative power of God; I coincide with it; I become not only its instrument but its living extension. And as there is nothing more personal in a being that his will, I merge myself, in a sense, through my heart, with the very heart of God.[6]

Second, cosmicism facilitates the blossoming of an ontic yearning, through the promptings of *ruach Elohim*, so that the heart is able to plummet more profoundly into the mystery of the cosmos and rest in God's cosmic Divine Presence—a *pining*, with a *drawing* to be in God, with God, with God-in-the-poor and God-indwelling-the-Earth. Third, cosmicism enables the stardust that humans are to experience more fully communion with the cosmic whole, in the way that Gary Snyder propounds: 'all is one and at the same time, one is all', since 'the self is both the individual and the whole'.[7]

This is truly a growth in the cosmic sense that opens the self to the whole of creation and to others.[8] As Elizabeth Liebert writes, 'One

[6] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Divin Milieu: An Essay on the Interior Life*, translated by Siôn Cowell (London: Collins, 1960), 34.

[7] Gary Snyder, *The Old Ways: Six Essays* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1977), 9; see also David Landis Barnhill, 'Great Earth *Sangha:* Gary Snyder's View of Nature as Community', in *Buddhism and Ecology: the Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard, 1997), 187–217, at 190.

[8] Pope Francis, during his visit to Mozambique, Mauritius and Madagascar, remarked: 'Religious faith can never be relegated to the private sphere, oblivious to the world around it. It must be open to the whole of creation, and at all times looking to bring the Gospel to others, to evangelize.' Quoted in *The Tablet* (14 September 2019), 5.

person can change a system, which in turn changes other systems, forming a network of cascading changes unimaginable from the point of the first contemplative action'.[9] Co-creative participation in the creative actions of *ruach Elohim* led Chardin to marvel, 'We shall be astonished at the extent and the intimacy of our relationship with the universe'.[10] 'Under the influence of faith', Chardin later adds, 'the universe is capable, without outwardly changing its characteristics, of becoming more supple, more fully animate—of being "sur-animated"'.[11]

Experience of the Sacred

Cosmicism is a mystagogy that encourages an existential experience of the sacred among us in order to tap into its imaginative energy, which can be translated into social energy to help reverse the ecological damage of the present age. For what is experienced as sacred is given due reverence; as the poet and essayist Wendell Berry affirms, the sacred is 'the language of familiarity, reverence, and affection by which things of value ultimately are protected'. 'People … defend what they love. To defend what we love, we need a particularizing language, for we love what we particularly know.'[12]

An existential experience of the sacred

The pathway of future sustainability involves the Spirit power of *ruach Elohim* bringing about an ecological conversion which, in Celia Deane-Drummond's postulation, further enables its awakened subjects to acknowledge 'the Giver and gift of the fragile Earth on which humanity and all other creatures are placed'.[13] In a similar vein, Pedro Walpole believes that ecological conversion generates 'an interior impulse' that will 'inspire a shift in how we view, and act in, reality'. This has the potential to reverse the ecological crisis and move life on Earth forward toward 'the eschatological goal of sublime communion between all creatures to which human and ecological society is ultimately orientated'.[14]

[9] Elizabeth Liebert, *Soul of Discernment: A Spiritual Practice for Communities and Institutions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 30.
[10] Chardin, *Milieu Divin*, 30.
[11] Chardin, *Milieu Divin*, 127. Chardin goes on to explain *sur-animation* as a transformation that is sometimes expressed in miracles, but more often 'by the integration of unimportant or unfavorable events within a higher plane and with a higher providence'.
[12] Wendell Berry, *Life is a Miracle: An Essay against Modern Superstition* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2000), 41, quoted in McCarthy and Tuchman, 'How We Speak of Nature', 953.
[13] Celia Deane-Drummond, 'Living Narratives: Defiant Earth or Integral Ecology in the Age of Humans', *Heythop Journal*, 59/6 (November 2018), 914–928, here 921.
[14] Pedro Walpole, 'Do Not Be Afraid: *Laudato si'* and Integral Ecology', *The Way*, 54/4 (October 2015), 9–22, here 22; Deane-Drummond, 'Living Narratives', 923. See also Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*,

Responding to the Call of the Times

Cosmicism is a response to the clarion call of Pope Francis for a 'a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint' through ecological conversion:

> Here, I would like to offer … an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith …. A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone, without a spirituality capable of inspiring us, without an 'interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity'.[15]

Cosmicism hopes to motivate those 'transformed' with an everyday commitment to an 'awe-filled contemplation of creation' that will offer them 'ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters'.[16]

This contemplation will result in the deepening of a daily mindfulness of humanity's cosmic identity, as expressed by David Toolan: 'the human is that being in whom the universe comes to itself in a special mode of conscious reflection'.[17] For Teilhard de Chardin this identity is *homo spiritus* or human-as-spirit: 'the phenomenon of spirit …. We are coincidental with it. We feel it from within … we are itself and it is for us everything.'[18] Such contemplation will also increase the 'properly cosmological sensibility' described by Robert Barron, 'whereby the human being and her projects are in vibrant, integrated relation with the world that surrounds her'.[19]

The pneumatic foundation of cosmicism is premised on the prevailing presence of *ruach Elohim* in creation, facilitating the experience of the 'God-who-is-Spirit' in the natural and the human worlds. Contemplation encourages those 'transformed' by *ruach Elohim* to engage in the diverse activities by which *ruach Elohim* sensitises more humans to be co-creators

nn. 80, 221. Walpole believes that the exaltation of the human spirit makes optimism possible: 'We now have a sense of spirituality and solidarity that is capable of inspiring us to nothing less than world conversion!'

[15] *Laudato si'*, nn. 105, 216.

[16] *Laudato si'*, nn. 125, 64.

[17] David Toolan, *At Home in the Cosmos* (New York: Orbis, 2001), 177.

[18] Teilhard de Chardin, 'The Phenomenon of Spirituality' (1937), in *Human Energy*, translated by J. M. Cohen (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 93.

[19] Robert Barron, '*Laudato Si*' and Romano Guardini', Catholic News Agency (25 June 2015), at https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/column/laudato-si-and-romano-guardini-3245.

in 'the mighty involvement of God in earthly affairs (Isaiah 63:10–14; Job 26:12–13)'.[20] This may involve participation in creative, communal, ritual celebrations aimed at suffusing, sustaining, sacralising and sensitising creation.

Such celebrations enable the individual to translate his or her experience of the sacred, as Celia Deane-Drummond envisages, 'in a way that inspires a deeper sense of responsibility' through embodying the ethic of alterity.[21] This ethic motivates the 'transformed' to become what Mary-Ann Crumplin calls 'respons-able' agents, for whom each call for justice is evaluated in terms of ensuring a sustainable future for vulnerable human beings, for all other life forms and, most significantly, for planet Earth.[22]

The Mystical Traditions

Cosmicism emanates from the mystical traditions. The mystics have embodied and lived a mystagogy which foregrounds the sapiential conviction that intimacy with the cosmos and the Earth involves the self being consumed, purged and transformed by God in sacred moments of encounter. These intimate encounters make it possible for *ruach Elohim* to intensify, in the words of Swati Samantary, 'the experience of the Divine immanence, the *is*ness of the omnipresent, eternal spirit in all things, and all things in it'.[23] Such spiritual attainment, embodied in the lives of the mystics, is subsequently translated through cosmicism into a practice of life for the promotion of the cosmic common good, especially of marginal communities and of the Earth itself.[24]

Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179)

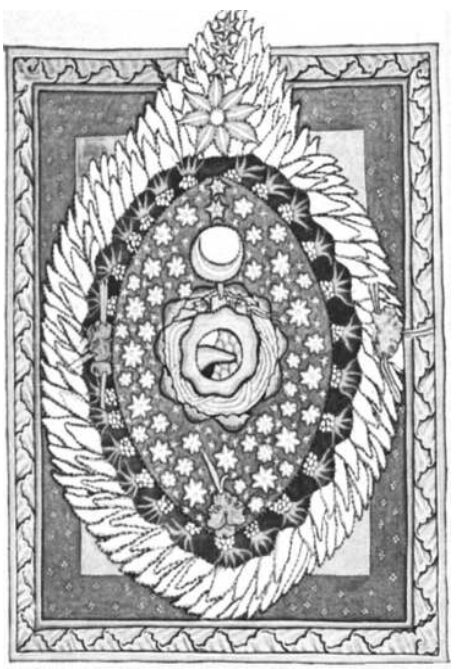
Hildegard's mystagogy is inseparable from the pneumatic experiences borne of her particular place and time in Bingen, Germany.

[20] Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World: A Global Conversation* (New York: Orbis, 2007), 15.
[21] Deane-Drummond, 'Living Narratives', 921.
[22] Crumplin argues for a Levinasian approach, 'inverting ontology and ethics' so that 'we can recognize our unique relationship with nature not simply such that I am a small and insignificant part of a greater Cosmos but instead that my identity as a human being is that of being the one who is uniquely responsable'. See 'Retuning to Wonder', *Heythrop Journal*, 60/4 (July 2019), 551–559, here 557.
[23] Swati Samantaray, 'Cosmic Mysticism: Quest for the Absolute in the Works of Tagore and Sri Aurobindo', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 6/1 (January 2017), 298–304, here 298.
[24] Such a praxis calls for an ethics of alterity that is beyond the scope of this article. For details, see Matthew Eaton, 'An-Archy and Awakening: The Ethical and Political Temporalities of Christology and Pneumatology', *Heythrop Journal*, 60/4 (July 2019), 624–633.

> It happened that, in the eleven hundred and forty-first year of the Incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, when I was forty-two years and seven months old, Heaven was opened and a fiery light of exceeding brilliance came and permeated my whole brain, and inflamed my whole heart and my whole breast not like a burning but like a warming flame, as the sun warms anything in its touch …. I sensed in myself wonderfully the power and mystery of secret admirable visions from my childhood—that is, from the age of five—up to that time, as I do now.[25]

For Hildegard, *ruach Elohim* was the Spirit power for a prophetic mission inspired by pentecost, when 'the Holy Spirit came openly in tongues of fire' to the apostles, removing their fear and enabling them to speak 'in many tongues' of what 'they remembered with perfect understanding' that Christ has taught them. And when they preached, 'the whole world was shaken by their voices …. And the Holy Spirit took their human fear from them, so that no dread was in them.'[26]

Hildegard had a mystagogical visionary experience of a time-bound, egg-shaped universe, 'small at the top, large in the middle and narrowed at the bottom', with 'bright fire' at the circumference and 'a shadowy zone' beneath.[27] Though its imagery is specific to her own context, Hildegard's vision displays some intriguing parallels with modern scientific ways of understanding the cosmos: the first years after the Big Bang, when the universe was 'a hot but cooling soup of fundamental particles', whose residual glow is now known as the Cosmic Microwave



The Universe, *by Hildegard of Bingen, from* Scivias, *1151*

[25] 'Declaration', in Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, edited by Kevin A. Lynch and others, translated by Mother Columbia Hart and Jane Bishop (Mahwah: Paulist, 1990), 59.
[26] 'Vision Seven', in Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, 415.
[27] 'Vision Three', in Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, 93.

Background; black holes; dark energy; and, in the later evolutionary period of the cosmos, supernovas.[28]

> And in the fire, there was a globe of sparkling flame, so great that the whole instrument was illuminated by it … over which three little torches were arranged in such a way that by their fire they held up the globe lest it fall …. And that globe at times raised itself up, so that much fire flew to it and therefore its flames lasted longer …. But from the fire that surrounded the instrument issued a blast with whirlwinds, and from the zone beneath it rushed forth another blast with its own whirlwinds …. In that zone, too, there is a dark fire of such horror that I could not look at it … full of thunder, tempest and exceedingly sharp stones, both large and small. And while it made its thunders heard, the bright fire and the winds and the air were all in commotion ….
>
> But beneath that zone is purest ether … and in it I saw a globe of white fire and great magnitude …. In that ether were scattered many bright spheres, into which the white globe from time to time poured itself and emitted its brightness, and then moved back under the globe of red fire.[29]

Hildegard's mystical experiences also demonstrate a certain *telos* in the creativity of *ruach Elohim:* the coming of a New Creation. This *telos* is captured in her twelfth vision, entitled the 'New Heaven and New Earth': 'And suddenly from the East a great brilliance shone forth, and there, in a cloud, I saw the Son of Man, with the same appearance He had in the world and with His wounds still open, coming with the angelic choirs'.[30] This *eschaton* is gloriously portrayed in vision thirteen, 'Symphony of the Blessed': 'Then I saw the lucent sky, in which I heard different kinds of music, marvelously embodying all the meanings I had heard before'.[31]

St Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556)

Drawn by *ruach Elohim,* a Basque mystic of the sixteenth century known as St Ignatius of Loyola has given to the Church a contemplative mystagogy, inscribed in his legacy, the Spiritual Exercises, that invites us to participate in God's labour in the world. Ignatius' mystagogical

[28] 'Epoch of Reionization', at https://www.haystack.mit.edu/ast/science/epoch/, accessed 25 August 2019. And see Marcus Chown, *Quantum Theory Cannot Hurt You* (London: Faber, 2006); Michael Dowd, *Thank God for Evolution* (San Francisco: Council Oak, 2009).
[29] 'Vision Three', in Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, 93.
[30] 'Vision Twelve', in Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, 515.
[31] 'Vision Thirteen', in Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, 525.

experiences of the cosmos convinced him that 'the meaning of human life and its supernatural goal is connected with the existential exercise of reaching the love present in all created things'.[32]

Ignatius had profound mystagogical experiences of the cosmos and nature throughout his life. In his *Autobiography*, Ignatius recounts how his heart was flooded with consolation when he gazed at the sky and the stars.[33] But his most profound experience of nature was at Manresa, when he sat down in contemplative mindfulness by the river Cardoner.[34] His practice of travelling long distances on foot through the countryside of Europe brought him closer to God the Creator and the Creative Spirit of God present and at work in all things in the cosmos and in nature. 'In Rome he would be in tears when he prayed at night from his balcony looking up at the stars.'[35]

Ignatius' mystical expression reaches its peak in the Contemplation to Attain Love in the Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* (Exx 230–237), where the divine glory and splendour of God break forth in creation. In the second point, Ignatius invites those on the sacred journey to bask in the Divine who 'dwells in creatures; in the elements, giving them existence; in the plants, giving them life; in the animals, giving them sensation; in human beings, giving them intelligence…' (Exx 235).[36] In the third point, Ignatius invites these sojourners to consider 'how God labours and works for me in all the creatures on the face of the earth', to become mindful of how God,

> … acts in the manner of one who is labouring. For example, God is working in the heavens, elements, plants, fruits, cattle, and all the rest—giving them their existence, conserving them, concurring with their vegetative and sensitive activities, and so forth (Exx 236).

Finally, in the fourth point, Ignatius enjoins us to consider how everything that is good emanates from God in an integrated manner, '… as the rays come down from the sun, or the rains from their source' (Exx 237). What becomes clear is that humans are inseparable from creation and

[32] Dos Santos, 'Amazonian Indigenous Spirituality', 45.
[33] *Autobiography*, n. 11.
[34] *Autobiography*, n. 20; also see Peter Saunders, '*Laudato si'* and the Giving of the Spiritual Exercises', *The Way*, 54/4 (October 2015), 118–128; and Paul L. Younger, 'Ignatian Spirituality and the Ecological Vision of *Laudato si'*', *The Way*, 54/4 (October 2015), 57–67, at 61.
[35] Peter Saunders, '*Laudato si'* and the Giving of the Spiritual Exercises', 119–120; see Pedro de Ribadeneira, *The Life of Ignatius Loyola*, translated by Claude Pavur (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2014), 5.1.15; MHSJ FN 4, 746–748.
[36] See Younger, 'Ignatian Spirituality and the Ecological Vision of *Laudato si'*', 61.

the Creator; in these three points *ruach Elohim* is the creative power that suffuses, sustains and sacralises God's creation and all things created in our common home.

This intimacy of this relationship with their Creator evokes within humans a gratitude that dispose them to participate in God's labour, as what Philip Hefner calls 'created co-creators'.[37] We have a destiny towards which *ruach Elohim* is drawing us, to participate in *ruach Elohim's* Spirit power and creative process, transforming the cosmos into a New Creation. This pneumatic mystagogy invites us as co-creators to use the power of imagination to realise in the Contemplation to Attain Love 'the spirituality of finding and loving God in all things which is the lasting outcome of the Exercises'.[38] Hence the Ignatian contemplative mystagogy offers co-creators, as mystics, the graces of being 'rooted unambiguously in creation' so that 'their fascination with the Holy One happens within the enveloping mystery of creation itself'.[39] For 'mysticism is about immersion in God's world at the service of God's creativity and liberation'.[40]

Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955)

As a Jesuit steeped in the Spiritual Exercises, the French philosopher and palaeontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin exemplified a lived pneumatic cosmicism in his mystical communion with the cosmos and all created things. His biographer Ursula King writes:

> His inner attraction to the great forces of nature, so deeply rooted in earlier childhood experiences, became so immensely strong that it awakened in him a vibrant cosmic consciousness … when surrendering himself 'to the embrace of the visible and tangible universe' 'as though in ecstasy, that through all of nature I was immersed in God'… a strong nature mysticism was to remain with him all his life.[41]

The intensity of the perceptibly lived cosmic mysticism of Teilhard de Chardin resonates with the emerging mystagogy of cosmicism; this is aptly demonstrated in his 'Hymn to Matter':

[37] See Philip Hefner, 'The Evolution of the Created Co-Creator', in *Cosmos as Creation: Theology and Science in Consonance*, edited by Ted Peters (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989) 211–234, at 226–228; and Gem Yecla, 'Co-creation Spirituality: Participating in God's Ongoing Work of Creation through Spiritual Direction and the Spiritual Exercises', *The Way*, 58/3 (July 2019), 7–18.
[38] Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 169.
[39] Diarmuid O'Murchu, *The Transformation of Desire: How Desire Became Corrupted—And How We Can Reclaim It* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007), 156; see Gem Yecla, 'Cosmic Intimacy', above, 29–45.
[40] O'Murchu, *Transformation of Desire*, 157.
[41] Ursula King, *Spirit of Fire: The Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 19– 20. And see Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe* (London: Collins, 1965), 68–70.

> Blessed be you, universal matter, immeasurable time, boundless ether, triple abyss of stars and atoms and generations: you who by overflowing and dissolving our narrow standards of measurement reveal to us the dimensions of God.
>
> I acclaim you as the divine milieu, charged with creative power, as the ocean stirred by the Spirit, as the clay molded and infused with life by the Incarnate Word.
>
> Raise me up then, matter, to those heights, through struggle and separation and death; raise me up until, at long last, it becomes possible for me in perfect chastity to embrace the universe.[42]

In contemplating the mystery of the cosmos, Chardin had a profound mystical experience as he fathomed the creative-unifying presence of God in the dynamic evolution of creation, albeit from the eschatological end point but 'not apart from the physical world, but rather through matter and in a certain sense in union with it'.[43] God 'creates to unite' all things through a cosmic process of spiritualisation-unification ('the one') of multiplicities ('the many').[44] For Chardin, God is all in all: there is a total suffusion of God in creation with a final summation of all things in God. For him, the stuff of the universe—a 'matter–spirit' that is constitutive of all life on Earth—is characterized by sacramentality.[45] The 'barren soil, stubborn rock', 'violent sea', 'brute forces' and even 'base appetites' of matter are also the 'melodious fountain of water whence spring the souls of men'; the 'boundless ethers, triple abyss of stars and atoms, universe in creation' exude the sacred sustaining presence of *ruach Elohim*.[46] To Chardin, this sacramentality of creation is 'an expression of God's love for the world' which God creates, suffuses, sustains and unifies through the creative Spirit power of *ruach Elohim*.[47]

A Personal Practice of Prayer

Cosmicism is a mystagogy with a pneumatic way of praying that disposes the one who prays to the promptings of *ruach Elohim*. This is a unique yet cumulative experience of plumbing the depths of the cosmos. I feel like

[42] Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*, 70.
[43] Donald P. Gray, *The One and the Many: Teilhard de Chardin's Vision of Unity* (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), 46, 34.
[44] See Gray, *One and Many,* chapter 1, 'Creative Union'.
[45] See Gray, *One and Many*, 158.
[46] Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*, 70–71.
[47] Gray, *One and Many*, 20.

a stardust sojourner, taking the next small steps in a sacred pilgrimage which I began three years ago, like a neophyte under the illuminating teaching of *ruach Elohim*.

What is unique in the prayer that follows is a new shift in my experience of being tutored, so as to understand in small measure about the 'trinitization' that enhances the communion of the countless stardust particles in the cosmos. In trinitization, an idea formulated by Teilhard de Chardin, 'our world assumes the completing function of an extrinsic Other, in which the three divine Persons may jointly express their triune relations and their unity'.[48] At the same time, I have gained further insight by thinking about the close relation between *pneumatization*, the infusion of Spirit, and neutrinos.

Neutrinos are abundant subatomic 'ghost' particles that suffuse and pass through anything and everything, only very rarely interacting with matter. 'About 100 trillion neutrinos pass through our bodies every second.'[49] Believing that *ruach Elohim* indwells in neutrinos, as in all created things, the awakened subject may seek to *pneumatize* by intentionalising these countless particles passing through the human body, investing them with Spirit to carry out specific purposes made possible by *ruach Elohim*.

I repeat my prayer as a mantra in the course of the day, so that it acquires a deeper felt-sense over time, and I grow in a deeper knowledge of the meaningfulness of the mantra that I embody and offer.

24 October 2019, 1.20–2.30 a.m. I visualise myself as a stardust sojourner *in the centre of the cosmos, seated in a lotus position, with palms opened and the fingers pointing downwards, afloat in deep space as a cosmic sacred spirit. I become mindful that as a stardust sojourner I am the self-reflexivity of the sacred, conscious cosmos-Earth. Once again, I witness the cosmic expansionary process of flaring forth in space and time, awe-inspired by its incessant moments of ontological newness. As a stardust sojourner, I become intuitively aware and grateful for the process of 'trinitization' of innumerable neutrinos, as they bond with each other with a shared purpose of emanating a new cosmos, pneumatizing them to accomplish the intentions*

[48] Maria Gratia Martin, *The Spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin* (Westminster, Md: Newman, 1968), 57–58. As Diarmuid O'Murchu writes, 'all energy seems to flow in patterns (sometimes chaotic) toward a preferred sense of direction' (*In the Beginning Was the Spirit: Science, Religion, and Indigenous Spirituality* [New York: Orbis, 2012], 73).

[49] Ann Finkbeiner, 'Looking for Neutrinos, Nature's Ghost Particles', *Smithsonian Magazine* (November 2010), available at https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/looking-for-neutrinos-natures-ghost-particles-64200742/, accessed 1 February 2020.

of ruach Elohim, *bringing forth the New Creation, New Heaven and Earth in the cosmos. In this liminal presence and communion, the chanting of the mantra echoes like a symphonic hymn of praise that reverberates throughout the cosmos, as if all created beings and myriad of life-forms were chanting in unison, each one with all, and all with each one, praising the Creator, moved by* ruach Elohim.[50]

I love you, O beloved fresh air, birds, dews, grass, squirrels, soil, stream, water, trees,
sky, light, moon, stars,
all of you, below me, above me, all around me, in the Cosmos, here on earth.

Each of you is divine. You are all divine.

I adore, I glorify you, the Divine, the Creative Spirit in all of you.

I bless all of you, I thank all of you:
all of you in me, I in all of you;
God in all of you and me, and all of you and me in God.

I adore and worship you, the Divine in you, O Creative Spirit in you, indwelling all created things in creation.

I bow in reverence to *ruach Elohim* sustaining, suffusing, sacralising, sensitising all of you and me.

You are all sacred, mystical, divine, mysterious.

All are sacred, divine, mystical, all one.

We are one in God, in the Risen Lord, in *ruach Elohim*, **God is in us all.**

In a divine and divinised cosmos of galaxies, milky ways, universes, planets, stardusts, God-particles, strings, quarks, neutrinos,
all in sacred communion with ALL, angels, saints, ancestors, apostles, martyrs, beloved, humans, life-forms,
all in symphonic cosmic praise to God, Trinity, celestial hosts.

All of you in me, me in all of you.

We are all one in the ALL who is through all, over all, in all, ALL in all.

An era in need of repair and reconciliation in the interdependent interrelations of the human and natural worlds calls for a contemplative mystique of gratitude for the gratuitous gift of the triune God, who is

[50] I have printed the mantra itself in bold; the rest of the text consists in 'felt-expressed' sentiments inspired by it.

present and active in the Earth and cosmos through the paschal mystery. Cosmicism, an emerging pneumatic mystagogy, is a proposed response in an era yearning for sustainable life with dignity and equity for all through the promotion of the cosmic common good, particularly *with* and *for* the poor and the fragile Earth. Cosmicism has been experienced and embodied by mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen, Ignatius of Loyola and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Cosmicism is akin to a 'school of intuitive learning' under the guidance of *ruach Elohim,* God's Creative Spirit, who beckons the awakened stardust sojourners to collaborate with the triune God in bringing about the New Creation, New Heaven and New Earth in the Cosmos and on Earth so that God will be all in all.

Jojo M. Fung SJ is a Malaysian Jesuit doing a postdoctoral fellowship at Campion Hall, Oxford, engaging in a research on three interrelated areas: pneumatology, sustainability and leadership. In May 2020 he will return to full time teaching as an assistant professor of contextual theology at the Asian Theology Programme, Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines. His article 'Pneumatology of Sacred Sustainability: Foundation of Cosmicism and Enspirited Leadership' will appear in *Loyola Papers*, 1/1 (2020).

Spirituality and Living

ELDERLY, BUT STILL ACTIVE

Reflections on Later Life

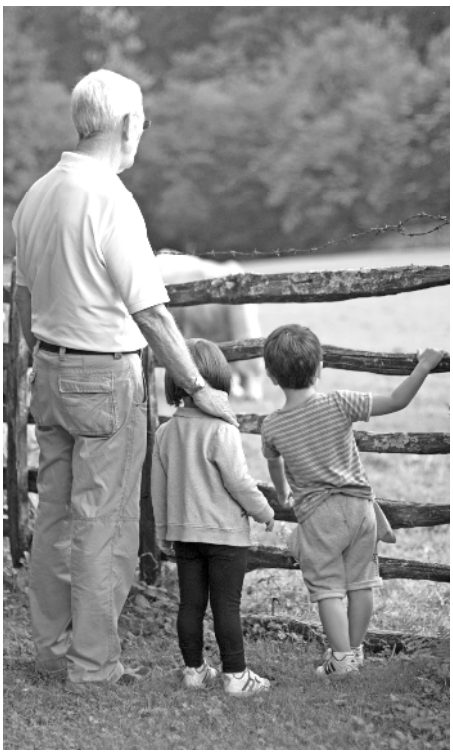
Marion Morgan

THERE DOES NOT SEEM to be much written about the stage of life when you are old but not dying. Yet there are very many of us in this position. At about the age of seventy we might realise that we have crossed the boundary into the territory belonging to the aged. The scenery has not changed dramatically—in fact, scarcely at all. Likening it to an expedition into the mountains, we are in the fields at the base with not very much climbing involved at all. But we are aware, if we allow ourselves to think about it, that the fence at the bottom of the mountain is now behind us. We are also aware of what may await us ahead.

At first, we may notice no difference at all in the 'going', but as we proceed we may find ourselves stopping a little more often for rests. We learn to pace ourselves a little more carefully. At some stage, sooner or later (and for some very much later), we find ourselves on the lower slopes. This can be very pleasant with many attractive stopping places. As the hills grow higher, the walk is more challenging. At last, we have to face the peaks which can be painful and utterly demanding. Many of us might meet with departure points from the journey at a lower level. There are practical ways of coping with the challenges of the journey—lightening our load, changing some habits, determining our priorities, making provisions for future possibilities.

For many, this stage can be very enjoyable. Released from the obligations of a growing family and the demands of working life, they get a chance to pursue hobbies, travel, enjoy spending time with friends. But for many others, this does not happen. Once we stop work, we have to find fresh motivations for getting up in the morning. Maybe a grown-up family is facing difficulties with which we are called upon to help. We

The Way, 59/2 (April 2020), 73–78



may look after grandchildren on a regular basis—as I understand it, one of the more joyful experiences of this stage of life! Or we may be given the task of caring for a more elderly relative or spouse, with all the limitations that that involves.

For those of us who have always tried to live a Christian life, there are other choices and challenges. Now we are, we may hope, more free, we can get more involved in our local parish. This is invaluable since parents, both of whom now generally work, are no longer as available as they were many years ago. But it can also mean that we have more difficulty in getting to Mass. We may have given up driving or have problems with buses. We become more dependent on other people.

It almost seems as though our contemporaries were divided into two groups: those who care, and those who are cared for. The dividing line of good or bad health is not always obvious. People's personalities also seem to fall into two groups: those who complain and resent their limitations, and those who somehow seem to keep cheerful.

We all know what I am trying to express. Older age can be immensely frustrating, and is the time when we really come up against our own weaknesses. It can also be a time of deep healing and sacrificial giving of oneself. Dare I say it? It is our purgatorial preparation for the joys of heaven. The strength and the ploys with which we could formerly conceal our not-so-good side slip away and we are exposed.

If we recognise this, this stage of life can be a time of great blessing. Little by little we can work quietly with the helping and loving hand of the Holy Spirit and the strength of the sacraments to make life easier for those around us, and even those who care for us. As our pride in ourselves gradually fades, we can enter into the deep peace and consolation of our true self: the self whom Jesus waits to welcome and reward; the self

that is rooted in him, with whom we have been, and still are, privileged to cooperate. The gradual diminishment of ourselves and our gifts and our perceived opportunities to do good gives way to a deeper and richer experience of God which shares itself in ways of which we are often totally unaware. We may develop a perspective on life which is helpful to others, and the wisdom of God may come into play when we do not recognise it. These are gifts to be treasured.

So what about our prayer life?

I ponder this text: 'Thus says the Lord: I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown' (Jeremiah 2:2). I think many faithful Christians of older age will relate to this. There were moments of great enthusiasm and great consolation when we first discovered the joy of following the Lord. We may have had moments when, like young lovers, we were overcome with the experience of giving and receiving love. But as the years went on, reality began to bite. In spite of times, perhaps, of great fruitfulness, in big or small projects, there came a time when the landscape looked more barren. We may have asked ourselves: *What is it all about now? We have seen it all before*. Then, through some miracle of grace, things may have taken an upward turn. We found we had gifts which were still of value, even though our energies were not quite what they were.

At each point of life, we turn once more to the Lord of all, and renew our commitment to God, with increasing faith and trust as the future seems more and more unpredictable. As in marriage, we learn to face difficulties and challenges together. And maybe, at last, when the main part of our work seems to be done, we finally feel the peace and joy of union with Christ. This is a quiet state: a deep river that runs through the depths of our being and brings nourishment to the lesser activities of 'outside' life.

What are the challenges of this late stage of life: a stage when we may still have most of our faculties and reasonable amounts of energy much of the time, but are more and more aware of the fragility and uncertainty of our earthly lives? This fragility is emphasized when friends, colleagues and family gradually drop out of the running order, through urgent caring commitments or their own illness or death.

Prayer may play an increasing role in our lives. We may spend time gently bringing before the Lord the needs of our friends and the problems of the world. Or we may find that our existing commitments, in which we continue to find the Lord, actually leave us with less time and energy

for prolonged prayer. As Brian Grogan records in his helpful book on the spirituality of ageing, an elderly Jesuit once said to him, 'Either I'm praying all the time or I'm not praying at all!'[1] It may be that because we do not have the energy for intense prayer, or because we fear the difficulty of taking up the cudgels of ordinary life once the prayer is over, we tend to remain in a quieter and less demanding form of prayer. After all, we know that the time is coming when we will see God without hindrance. We may be content to pursue a gentler regime of prayer which allows us to continue with the active works we are still able to perform, knowing that our time on earth is getting shorter.

The ups and downs in our life are muted. There is a peaceful basis for all our activities and feelings: one to which we can return even after getting worked up. There is a more relaxed attitude to things. It is as St Augustine said: 'Love, and do what you want'.[2] Often what you do seems to have been inspired, even thought it doesn't feel like it at the time—you find you have done or said the right thing without knowing it. You just said or did what came into your head and found it was part of something else.

Every now and again, you are drawn to just a whiff or fleeting sensation of what once was—the depths that were once experienced—and that is enough to feed you, renew your calling and draw you back on course. Otherwise, life looks and feels little different to ordinary life around you—except you know that you yourself are different. A union has taken place deep within you and nothing will ever be the same again. Of course you do things wrong or think wrong things but your heart isn't in it. You know what truth and goodness look and feel like, and want none other.

This deep union with God brings a new dimension to all that we do, at the same time as becoming so natural to us that we wonder if we are doing anything. Times of prayer can be confusing, as we try and bring to the surface that which is deep within us. The Divine Office and other vocal prayers become invaluable, as they put into words our deep feelings and aspirations.

The ordinary functions of life may become hard work: getting up, washing, preparing and eating food, going out. All this takes energy. We

[1] Brian Grogan, *To Grow in Love: A Spirituality of Ageing* (Dublin: Messenger, 2012), 37.
[2] Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, translated by Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2008), 7.8.

can draw on the energy of God and the saints to help us in this, and it works. It can serve to make even more real our relationship with the other Reality.

How do we approach death when we are still relatively alive? One friend said to me recently: *I absolutely hate growing old!* It does not help when we resent the difficulties without savouring the advantages. It does not help to look back at all the things we used to do and all the things we have achieved and bewail their cessation. The only real way is to look forward to the renewal of life and, like St Thérèse, who welcomed the first signs of her terminal illness, rejoice that this new life is approaching. The deprivations—the loss of beauty, the loss of energy, the loss of friends—should never be seen outside the context of the resurrection life that awaits us. But it is not easy to say this. And, in spite of all, it is not easy to accept these diminishments. As, one by one, our material props are removed, we have the choice: do we resent their removal, or do we accept it as part of our necessary final asceticism, or purgatory?

How do we approach death when we are still relatively alive?

Sometimes I think I indulge myself too much. But then I think that the most important thing is to keep going and see that I keep my energies up to continue doing what I should be doing—practical things such as helping in the church, relating to neighbours, supporting people when appropriate or even just speaking sometimes to people on buses: basically, just trying to lead a Christian life as a full human being with strengths and weaknesses. I need more rest and free time in order to continue doing activities which take more from me than they used to.

We all have our own suffering and our own ways of dealing with it, although some suffer far worse than others. It is all part of getting older. But we don't need to self-inflict it! We are allowed to be kind to ourselves in whatever ways actually keep us going. Basically all we can do is leave everything up to God, and simply try to cope cheerfully and peacefully with what happens in the ordinary course of life. If we try too hard or continue to do what is beyond our strength, we might be doing more harm than good, and might even distort God's will for us. Discretion and discernment are needed in order to decide when we should let go and when we should carry on. Training a successor is an important consideration where this is appropriate. Learning to accept help when we need it is a major step forward.

Trying to look back too much or trying to recall past experiences can lead to a nostalgia which is unhelpful, although memories treasured

appropriately are consoling. It is more constructive to look forward humbly and gently to a steady future path which will end with death and the entrance into the next life. Or, to put it more simply, live in the present with an awareness of the future. Look forward gently to the next life and meanwhile live this one to the full, to the end.

I visit regularly a local residential and nursing home, and the joy and gratitude of some of the residents is truly inspiring. They are always ready to greet someone and do not let their personal hardships and deprivations get in the way of their outgoing and loving interest in others. They exercise a ministry of encouragement and hope. Oh, to be like that when I am truly old!

We all have so much to look forward to. As it says in the book of Isaiah:

> You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (62:3–5)

We are called to rejoice, to be of good courage and to rely at a deeper and deeper level on the God who will strengthen our hearts.

Marion Morgan was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1969 and has since been involved in ecumenism at local and national levels, parish work, freelance writing and caring for an autistic adult. For the past ten years she has been a member of the Order of Consecrated Virgins.

PILGRIMAGE AND ADDICTION

Walking with Ignatius

Anonymous

I SHARE THIS ANONYMOUSLY because I have to. 'Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to put principles before personalities.'[1] I recently enjoyed the privilege of a week of pilgrimage on the Ignatian way. I have tried to walk intentionally with Ignatius of Loyola by seeing, in his life and conversion, similarities with my own journey. I wrote a little each evening as I moved through the pilgrimage. It is my hope that, walking with Ignatius and experiencing the graces of this week, I too can grow in my journey.

Cannonball Moment

In May 1521, Iñigo de Loyola was hit by a cannonball while defending a castle against impossible odds in Pamplona, Spain. Defeated and injured, he was carried to his convalescence by fellow soldiers. Staring at the end of his military career and possibly of any kind of a useful life at court, he began to read the only available books in the castle—Ludolf of Saxony's *Life of Christ* and a copy of the *Lives of the Saints*. While these books were not his first choice, he began to pay attention to how they made him feel in contrast to the usual court romances he preferred. Upon reflection he realised that while he liked them all, the ones related to Christ and the saints sustained a feeling of consolation within him while the courtly romances left him in desolation.[2] Over his eleven months of convalescence he came to realise that he wanted and yearned for a different life, one that required a turning away from his old set of values and priorities to another life altogether.

On 10 September 2017 I admitted out loud to myself, in front of another person, that I was an alcoholic. It was one of the most painful,

[1] Alcoholics Anonymous, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (New York: AAWS, 2012 [1952]), tradition 12.
[2] *Autobiography*, nn. 1–8.

frightening, vulnerable and exposed moments I have ever experienced. How could I be *one of those people*? I felt like a hypocrite and a failure in every way. I had failed my wife, my children, my profession and the faith I professed. I am an alcohol addict. My functional God was *not* Jesus of Nazareth. When I finally surrendered and stated unequivocally that I was powerless over alcohol and that my life was unmanageable, it was devastating. I had been raised with the view that simple willpower determines one's choices, and that drunks, addicts and other losers were fully responsible for their own situation. Thankfully a loving wife was the instrument of God for me at the beginning of this recovery and literally 'willed my good' through gentle support, no judgment and a bottomless well of compassion and patience.

When I realised that only *a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity*, I felt like a kindergartner with a PhD in theology.[3] The analogy I use is that I taught people about fishing (theology) for a living—all kinds of fishing—fly-fishing, hand-fishing, shore fishing, industrial fishing, and the theory behind the different kinds of fishing. One day someone gave me a fishing rod and said, *go use this and if you catch something you will not die of hunger*.

I was introduced to a simple spirituality grounded in the limits of being human—I need God because without God I will die. I was deeply humbled in a good and necessary way. I had been surrendering myself to alcohol for many years. It was nothing dramatic, just withdrawing into the bottle each evening until it became more important than family, children, job and friendships. Now I had to surrender myself to a different ultimate—a different set of values and priorities—and it was terrifying.

Following the moment of realisation that I was alcoholic (the cannonball) came many months of my own 'convalescence'. This meant working with a sponsor and a spiritual director to understand this disease better. Like Ignatius at Loyola castle, I began to reflect on the past, present and possible future of my life. I began to understand that alcoholism is not simply about drinking; drinking is a symptom of how people with my disease try to manage the world through our character defects. I had to get at the many causes of my thoughts and behaviours, and that was no easy journey. When I thought of my new life with its possibilities, I felt great consolation. When I remembered being a prisoner to alcohol, I felt and continue to feel great desolation.

[3] See *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, step 2.

The Twelve Steps

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practise these principles in all our affairs.

First, *I made a decision to turn my will and life over to the care of God as I understood Him*.[4] For me this meant reaffirming who God is for me and beginning to live as if this is true. I focused on the absolute love and care that God has for all people. With that as prelude, I was able to make a moral inventory of myself, discuss it with others (my sponsor and my spiritual director) and ask God to relieve me of all my character defects. While there were moments of self-crucifixion and even some 'scruples', if you will, that selfishness gave way to wanting to turn towards others in loving service.

I began by making a list of those whom I had hurt and made direct amends when possible. I then embarked on the 'maintenance' steps that include continuing to take personal inventory (largely through the

[4] *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, step 3.

Ignatian Examen and AA meetings) and promptly admitting when I am wrong. I seek through prayer and meditation to improve my conscious contact with God as often as I can (largely through AA prayers that are consistent with Ignatian spirituality—and there are many) and, finally, I try to share what I have learnt with other alcoholics by practising these principles of AA in all my affairs.

The moral inventory done with my sponsor was probably the most difficult aspect of my journey, as steps 4-6 forced me to go deep. It was only with my sponsor that I could get at the root causes of my defects and only after many weeks of patient exploration. I thought of these steps and what I needed to give up as we approached Montserrat.

Montserrat

Ignatius must have thought about what he wanted to give up for his ongoing conversion over the 300 miles he travelled from Loyola. I imagined him leaving his sword on the altar in front of Our Lady of Montserrat. For Ignatius, the sword would have represented so much—a brotherhood of soldiers guaranteeing him companionship and protection, membership in a family as a soldier, status as a nobleman, identity as a warrior who took what he wanted by violence when necessary—all the things in his culture he had aspired to be and do. In many ways it was his identity. I then tried to reproduce that action in myself in the context of my own life.

St Ignatius' sword, altar of St Ignatius, Sacred Heart Church, Barcelona

I asked myself what I would leave on the altar in my own journey. What determined and framed my own identity, power and protection? For me it was fear that manifested itself in anger: first, a fear of not being enough, or good enough; second, a fear

of failure; third, a fear that suffering, injustice and evil would finally win (despair). These are my greatest fears.

My anxiety about the value of myself is simply who I am as a human being. I cover it up and try to overcome it in all sorts of ways—through confidence, through assertiveness, through knowledge—but it is always there, lurking in the background. It often manifests itself in an ego that reacts to anyone who does not perceive me to be as amazing as I need to be seen to be. This wish comes from a fear of not being good enough. Because I may not be good enough, or enough at all, I fear that I will fail. When I fail I am worth nothing because a desire to succeed has formed me and continues to define me. Life will be more difficult if I fail largely because nobody will love me. (So says the voice within me.)

Finally, I fear that if I am not good enough and if I fail then all the good I want to see in this world will fail as well. The suffering I see around me will never end, the powerful will always triumph over the weak and the spirit that destroys will always win. Note that my fear suggests that I am so important, almost godlike, that if my fears come true, then all is lost. This mixture of fear and ego is powerful. This is what I tried to leave on the altar at Montserrat.

Leaving my fear on the altar revealed itself in a real surrender. I had always known, but never wanted to admit, that I could *not* overcome my addiction by myself. I knew that from years of trying on my own—and failing. Drinking was the main way I managed my own fear and the anger that came from that fear. I was a very functional alcoholic—no drunk driving, no violent outbursts, no huge public embarrassments (although some significant minor ones), just a slow and steady surrender to alcohol. When I finally admitted that I could not do this on my own I also had to admit that I had failed. All was lost.

What happened after this was a lifting up of my 'self' by God through the love and care of my wife and the AA fellowship. After about sixty days of meetings and sponsorship the compulsion to drink left me. I cannot explain how, and I cannot explain why. All I know is that I no longer desire to drink. While I am grateful for the removal of that desire (something that did not come from me), I still need to address constantly the character defects that fed my addiction.

Manresa

I tried to leave my fear and ego on the altar of Montserrat with the sword of Ignatius. Unlike his sword, a physical thing, my fears do not always

stay there. And this brings me to Manresa. I was amazed while reading the autobiography of Ignatius that his own growth and development were anything but linear. Four aspects of this are worth mentioning as they relate to my own journey.

First, Ignatius learnt a lot about himself during his eleven months of reflection, prayer, physical and mental illness, and insights. As he learnt to discern 'the spirits within' he would often make great progress followed by steps backwards. Second, while he wanted to be completely dependent upon God, he consistently and continually reached out to confessors and 'holy people' for spiritual advice. Third, he moved back and forth from healthy to unhealthy and back again to healthier stages of development, but had significant lapses owing to scruples and the resulting despair. Finally, Ignatius learnt to accept both his moral and physical limits. Confronting the scruples by trusting in the love and mercy of God, and even identifying some false consolations (relating to his need for sleep), he began to get clarity in discernment and grow into a healthier spirituality. Growth is far from linear, and this is fine.

In a similar way I have learnt much about myself through my period of 'convalescence' which has also included prayer, meditation, reflection, mental illness, community fellowship and sponsorship. I have made important realisations, only to live in denial for some time before I could accept and move into and through them. I have given up alcohol but still struggle with the underlying character defects that move me towards addiction. Second, after struggling to stop this addiction by myself I have had to reach out to others for help. This dependence on others in a culture that prizes self-sufficiency has been difficult. Thankfully, I have received spiritual direction for many years and this made accepting a sponsor much easier. Third, I have regressed in some concrete ways. Recently I became aware that many of my behaviours while I was actively alcoholic utilised emotional manipulation that I have only now begun to recognise. This behaviour (as with much alcoholic behaviour) was directed towards the people I love the most in my life. Do my amends need to be redone? Do I need forgiveness for every additional harm I now realise I have done? This has brought me to the brink of despair as well—and recently.

Finally, I am an alcoholic. This is a limitation, but God wants to use me as I am for God's own ends. This limit on my freedom—my addiction—will serve God somehow, even though it does not come from God. I and others have already benefited so much from my acceptance

of this reality and what that acceptance has allowed me to be and do. My one prayer is that I can always serve God from my limits.

So, with Ignatius, I have now come to Barcelona, and tomorrow I leave for Italy. While Ignatius had continual struggles with scruples and failed to connect with 'holy' persons in a way that helped him, I have felt great consolation at morning Mass and especially at the Sagrada Familia. With Ignatius, I hope to continue to grow and learn as my pilgrimage continues.

Rome

My trip to Rome was much easier than Ignatius' own journey. His began with a failed attempt to fulfil his initial 'Jerusalem impulse' and his efforts both to serve souls and to receive an education were fraught with difficulty. Two major aspects of this time in Ignatius' life stand out to me. First is the power of initial impulses (Jerusalem, in his case) and the history in which we are embedded. Second is the way Ignatius responded to gossip and maliciousness by those opposed to him and his new spirituality.

Probably because of the books he was reading while convalescing, as well as the centrality of Jerusalem as a place of pilgrimage at that time, Ignatius 'jumped the gun', so to speak, on the rightness of his call to live there. By this I mean that Ignatius determined, prior to learning how to understand the movements of his heart through discernment, that God wanted him to live and serve in Jerusalem. He followed his initial goals, irrespective of the lessons he had learnt. Think of how many incredible insights he had while at Manresa—insights into the Holy Trinity, why God created the world, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the humanity of Christ—and finally of his enlightenment at the river Cardoner about all things spiritual with regards to faith and learning. Yet, still, the 'end' to which he was committed—living and serving souls in Jerusalem failed to be his true calling or even to happen at all.

Thanks to his humility and an ecclesiology of obedience (which in this case served him well) the *Autobiography* states the following: 'Once the said pilgrim had understood that it was God's will he should not be in Jerusalem, he had constantly had with him thoughts about what was to be done' (n.50). This is truly extraordinary when you think about it. Ignatius dictated his autobiography, and one cannot help but wonder what he thought he was teaching his readers (future Jesuits?) by including both his spiritual insights and this significant failure. The importance

of humility could be the reason. No matter how much we think we know, or what we believe God has given us, we can still get it wrong. When we do, we need to reset our expectations and enter back into discernment, instead of either continuing to follow our own will or giving up in despair. And where did Ignatius' discernment take him? It took him back to consolation: the service of souls, and how an education would allow him to do this better. In a way, Ignatius went from jumping the gun to taking baby steps in how to respond to God's will.

This reminds me of when I first decided to serve God in some concrete way (I was nineteen years old). I thought the only way to do that was to become a priest. I had a wonderful conversation with a Franciscan priest, while studying abroad in Jerusalem, who said something to me I will never forget: *You do not have to love Christ to be a priest, you have to love the priesthood to be a priest*. I remember being completely blown away by that insight, and knowing immediately that I was, in fact, *not* called to be a priest. It had never occurred to me that there was any other way of serving God than becoming a priest. Now, as a faithful Catholic with 22 years of service, I know that there is. I see the same mistake in my initial discernment that Ignatius experienced—we both assumed something because it was the prominent manner of responding to our 'call' at a certain time and place. Further discernment was required.

In a similar way, today, there are times in my own unfolding journey when I think the best and only way to serve God more fully is to strive for more power and responsibility within my work context. That may not be the case. I live in a culture which prizes upward mobility and accomplishment, and it is difficult to think of myself as 'successful' if I do not aspire to greater power and influence (see fears numbers one and two). It is quite possible that God wants me to remain where I am. That may very well be where my gifts are best utilised. It may also be that this very pilgrimage and this moment in my life of overcoming my addiction to alcohol are the beginnings of a new call that I could never previously have imagined and towards which I could never otherwise have taken the path. Discerning that with the clarity I desire, has not been easy.

The second relevant lesson from Ignatius' journey to Rome was the way he dealt with detractors throughout his years of writing the *Spiritual Exercises* as well as his years of education and work to form the Society of Jesus. He dealt with accusations directly and honestly; and his frustration was not for himself, but for how gossip and calumny obstructed his work for God. Both aspects are important.

Ignatius would often seek out the inquisitors when he heard he was under investigation—not waiting or evading them like someone with something to hide. At the same time, he would relate to them familiarly rather than formally as someone of honour—which was a way of reminding himself that he served only God, not those in authority. When he had to suffer consequences, just or not, he would accept them with patience and openness until the situation could be resolved, and he showed little or no fear for himself. He underwent humiliations such as imprisonment as a result of false rumours, studying alongside schoolchildren to learn Latin, begging to support himself in Paris during his studies and travelling over the summer to Flanders to beg more in order to secure enough money to study throughout the school year.

I can learn much from Ignatius' approach. As I have heard often in the meeting rooms of AA, *we are egomaniacs with an inferiority complex*. I take rumours and calumny much too personally and when that happens, it often becomes more about 'me', usually in anger, than the work I do for God. Part of this is simply spiritual immaturity (having my 'meaning-giver' more fully and constantly in my mind) but there is also an aspect of simply needing to develop a thicker skin. Someone will always feel threatened by what I do if I am following God's will, whether in service to the poor, promoting a theology of grace and mercy or confronting people on justice issues where deeply held views are challenged and found wanting. Sometimes simply going to the margins of what is traditional in whatever one does can create enemies. I need to accept those responses as part of the cost of discipleship and not take them so personally.

There is a paragraph in step 10 of AA that is essential for me. It is related to maintaining what is called 'emotional sobriety', and it is worth quoting in full.

> It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us. If somebody hurts us and we are sore, we are in the wrong also. But are there no exceptions to this rule? What about 'justifiable' anger? If somebody cheats us, aren't we entitled to be mad? Can't we be properly angry with self-righteous folk? For us of A.A. these are dangerous exceptions. We have found that justified anger ought to be left to those better qualified to handle it.[5]

Ignatius seemed to know this intuitively. It is one of my greatest challenges.

[5] *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, step 10.

Ignatius' writing desk, Collegio Internazionale del Gesù, Rome

The Early Jesuits

I have to say that Rome was a great contrast to the journey there—and at times I felt more like Luther than Ignatius. I tried to contextualise what I was seeing and experiencing, but it was difficult. Visually, I could express it by comparing the simple wooden desk of Ignatius to the baroque grandeur of the many churches we visited. That contrast also serves as a final reflection on the first draft of the Institute of the Society of Jesus in 1539 and its relationship to worship. There are many aspects of this Institute which serve as a critique by Ignatius of the Church in his day.[6] I will point out two aspects that were important to me.

The plain desk in the second room of Ignatius' residence in Rome was the place from which about 7,000 letters were written. I thought about the good those letters accomplished, and the importance of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Constitutions* that were drafted there. Consistently

[6] See *The Autobiography of St Ignatius of Loyola*, translated by Joseph F. O'Callaghan (New York: Fordham, 1992), appendix 3, 'The First Sketch of the Institute of the Society of Jesus (1539)', 106–109.

with the First Principle and Foundation, Ignatius' desk served his need to correspond with others in his work of serving God. 'From this it follows that we ought to use [the other things on the face of the earth] to the extent that they help us toward our end, and free ourselves from them to the extent that they hinder us from it.' (Exx 23) It was consoling to see the application of this in his personal residence—that he lived out both his vow of poverty and the First Principle and Foundation, when he could have had any kind of elaborate furniture he desired.

Second, the mode of religious life described by Ignatius in the Institute reflected a deliberate choice to prioritise the 'active' life over the 'contemplative', without ever devaluing the importance of prayer. One sees this clearly in the fifth section of the Institute:

> All the companions who are in holy orders, even though they acquire no right to benefices and incomes, shall be bound to say the office according to the rites of the church, but not in choir lest they be led away from the works of charity to which we have all dedicated ourselves.[7]

The reason for this was that 'comforting the sick in both body and spirit' could occupy days and nights and depended on the needs of the sick—which were more important to Ignatius than a style of worship.

It is consoling to me that Ignatius put the needs of the marginalised and afflicted in front of 'proper' religious worship. For this reason, I felt some desolation when we visited churches unrelated or only slightly related to the life of Ignatius. The Church, for me, has never been art and architecture, but rather a living community dedicated to serving God's will in this world. Without some contact with the 'people of God' who utilise these buildings, the structure itself—even with all its beauty—is not as meaningful to me. This is why the daily liturgy in simple chapels or rooms was perhaps the most significant experience for me. We were coming together as a community of people seeking to understand our own spiritual journey through the life of St Ignatius.

I, like Ignatius, longed for contact with the poor or souls to be saved—where were they on our journey? I think there was a huge leap from a life in the countryside to life in the city of Rome with all its busyness. How easy it is for us to lose touch with that to which we are

[7] 'First Sketch of the Institute', n. 5. And see Joseph F. Conwell, *Impelling Spirit: Revisiting a Founding Experience, 153., Ignatius of Loyola and His Companions* (Chicago: Loyola, 1997), 392–393.

called when there is so much distracting stimulation constantly around us! Ignatius calls us to confront this aspect of spirituality—to make time daily both for the Examen *and* service to others as part of our pilgrimage to God.

True Pilgrimage

I believe that my pilgrimage was truly a pilgrimage. We journeyed to spaces made sacred by the experiences of Ignatius and the different stages of his own conversion and service to God. We exiled ourselves from our daily life of hundreds of e-mails and the daily busyness that often makes reflection and prayer difficult at best. Finally, we were encouraged to engage in introspection, reflection and prayer by intentionally connecting our lives and journeys to the life and journey of Ignatius.

At the end of this pilgrimage, I find myself deeply grateful for the opportunity to grow and develop as a Catholic inspired by Ignatius of Loyola. I find my journey continuing to parallel his and can only pray that I may respond with half the openness and acceptance of the call he had. I now have a firm sense of place and experience to ground my own Ignatian spiritual journey, including the journey away from alcoholism. Ignatius is no longer just a saint about whom I read in texts, but very much human like me, inspiring me, guiding me, supporting me in my own journey to serve souls and live for the greater glory of God.

The author of this article has taught theology in the United States at both high-school and university levels.

COMPASSION AS A PRIESTLY VIRTUE

Robert E. Doud

ACCORDING TO THE LETTER to the Hebrews, compassion is associated with the role and function of the Jewish high priest.[1] His sympathy and care for all the people, based in their covenant with God, may be regarded as his defining virtue. So it is with Christ, the eternal high priest, and so it should be among all the priestly people of God, the Church. Precisely out of compassion for the Church and its people, this must explicitly include all the women of the Church, whose sensibilities are essential to the adequate understanding of compassion and of the priesthood. Let us say that anyone who shows compassion is acting in a priestly way.

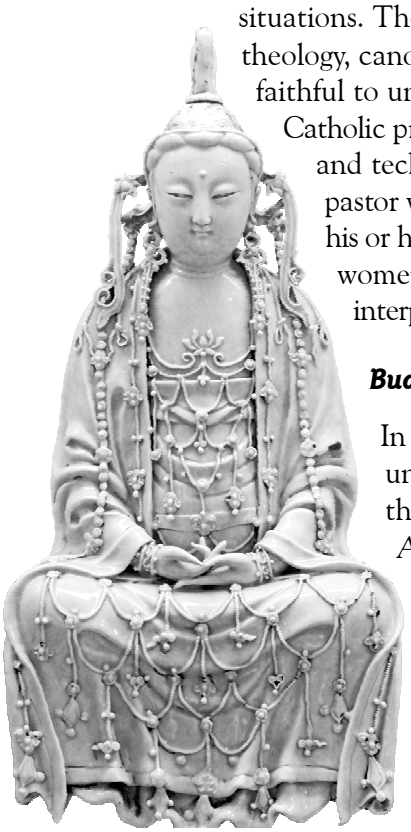
The idea of priesthood is connected in the Old Testament to the Temple, acts of sacrifice, victims, blood, the Law and the covenant. These ideas constitute a family of closely related and associated biblical themes and concepts that abide together at the heart of the Jewish faith. The priest of the Old Testament is both set apart from the rest of the people for special duties and a special role, and joined to the people by a special bond of sympathy with them. He not only immolates the sacrificial victim, but also gathers the blood and sprinkles it upon the people, thus strengthening the bond of love and covenant that exists between the people and God.

In Hebrews, Jesus Christ is the final High Priest. For the author of the letter, this title expresses, above all other titles, the identity and function of Jesus Christ.[2] This High Priest is sent from above; he is not merely chosen among the people for a particular ministry. Here, *passion* means suffering. Compassion is *com-passion*, *suffering with*—sympathy for suffering. Our human suffering is joined to the suffering of Jesus in his own life, passion and death by crucifixion. He is both priest and victim in the ultimate act of suffering.

[1] 'For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize [*sympathēsai*] with our weaknesses' (Hebrews 4: 15); 'He is able to deal gently [*metriopathein*] with the ignorant and the wayward' (Hebrews 5: 2).
[2] Hebrews is not considered by scholars to be the work of Paul; its author remains unknown.

In the Gospels, we find pictures of Jesus as he has compassion for the crowd. This occurs when Jesus feeds five thousand people out of a small supply of loaves and fishes.[3] Compassion or sympathy is the typical feeling of Jesus toward other people as individuals and in groups. As it appears in Hebrews, compassion is analogous to the mercy or loving kindness of God toward God's people. The compassion of Hebrews thus corresponds to the *chesed* of the Hebrew scriptures. *Chesed,* or loving kindness, also has overtones of steadfastness, charm and beauty. It is an undeserved and abounding kind of love.

The high priest and the other priests of the Old Testament were experts in the Jewish Law and in applying the Law to various situations. The present-day Roman Catholic priest is trained in theology, canon law and pastoral psychology, and in helping the faithful to understand their mission and vocation. Indeed, the Catholic priest has an obligation to study up-to-date methods and techniques of giving pastoral advice. The competent pastor will have the desire to improve constantly, to know his or her flock ever better and *to smell like the sheep*.[4] Today, women enjoy pastoral roles in ministry as do men. We interpret these roles as channels of care and compassion.



Guan Yin, the* bodhisattva *of compassion, Chinese porcelain, Yuan dynasty

Buddhism and the Stoics

In Buddhism, compassion, or *karuna*, is a heartfelt unity with all things and with the universe. *Bodhi* is the spiritual wisdom that accompanies *karuna*. *Ahimsa* or non-violence is the universal practice that accompanies compassion in Buddhism and in other Eastern religions. All religions, at their highest and worthiest points, advocate and promote love, compassion and doing no harm to other people or to other forms of life. In Buddhism, the *bodhisattvas* are the supremely wise beings who have attained nirvana, but who, out of sheer compassion, hold open the door to enlightenment for all other humans to pass through.

[3] Matthew 15: 32: 'I have compassion for the crowd … I do not want to send them away hungry'.

[4] See Pope Francis, homily at Chrism Mass, 28 March 2013: 'be shepherds, with the "odour of the sheep", make it real, as shepherds among your flock, fishers of men'.

In philosophy, the ancient Stoics considered compassion to be a high virtue and a source of connection between humankind and the entire universe.[5] The same sensibility occurs in the Enlightenment philosophy of David Hume, in which the 'sentiment of benevolence', that is, the feeling of compassion or sympathy, also called *fellow feeling*, was the defining human characteristic and the chief motivator of human action. It is hard to say that Hume's ethics and philosophy of human nature were not derived at least in part from Christianity and the bible.

With Stoic sympathy (*oikeiōsis*) we make our own or appropriate the feeling or suffering of another as if it were our own. We expand our sense of self to encompass others and we feel a sense of kinship with all living things. We recognise our interconnectedness with others and learn that this feeling of familiarity is crucial to virtuous action in society and to the good life for ourselves. We feel obliged to shape our behaviour accordingly. For a Stoic, our value system becomes a blend of social consciousness, public service and personal transformation. Our concern and loyalty are directed to the *oikoméne* or civilised world. Our disposition toward others includes a leaning toward forgiveness, whereby we are inclined to overlook their faults, failings and offences.

It must be said that the Stoic philosophers were better known for their doctrine of *apathy* than for their doctrine of sympathy. *Apatheia* is the recommended lack of feeling the Stoics advocated in their relationships with people and things. Attachments to people and things cause pain and disappointment when such attachments are broken or when things are destroyed. Thus, the Stoic thinks, it is better not to form such attachments in the first place. However, the Stoic also thinks that the universe is like a large organism or body of which we are all parts, and that what happens to any part happens to the whole. Hence, there is an all-pervasive and all-abiding sympathy of each part with every other part.

Compassion and Justice

Compassion and justice are partners and co-principles in deciding matters about how people should treat one another. Compassion says that people should be treated kindly, and justice says that people must be treated fairly. A feeling for what others deserve from us and a feeling for what we owe

[5] See *Sympathy in Transformation: Dynamics between Rhetorics, Poetics and Ethics*, edited by Roman Alexander Barton and others (Boston, Ma: Walter de Gruyter, 2018), 3: 'Human sympathy in the individual is therefore considered as an immediate and irresistible affection, which is prior to any extrinsic effort towards achieving cooperative social consent, as Marcus Aurelius notes …'.

to others are the basis of justice and fairness in our dealings with them. Such feelings may abate at the border of minimal respect and weak tolerance unless they can be more deeply rooted in the sympathetic passions. Compassion suggests that we generally harbour attitudes of ever-increasing affection, appreciation and pity for other people.

Perhaps justice is based more in our reason, when we recognise our obligations toward others and their rights in relation to our behaviour, and compassion in the heart or in the feeling side of our nature. I may be inclined to help another out of compassion, even before I recognise in my reason that I have a duty or responsibility towards that person. Certainly, reason and compassion work together, as reason organizes my responses to others, and compassion starts and sustains the initial boost of energy that drives my helpful behaviour. Both compassion and justice require prayer and meditation, as we simmer ourselves in these attitudes and allow them to nourish our judgments and actions.

In recent decades, we have seemed to move away from the idea of charity as it is now commonly understood and to replace charity with the idea of social justice. This is because the prevailing idea of charity seemed to imply that we owe nothing to the poor, the migrants or the homeless, and that we are acting kindly, but without obligation, when we practise the corporal acts of mercy. But now we have widened our idea of justice to include *social justice*, which demands more of us than simply fulfilling our promises and agreements. We realise that whatever we have, we have been given to share. Others have an abiding claim upon our time, our concern and our resources. Indeed, our idea of human nature itself has changed in so far as the emphasis is now on the social and shared part of our nature, rather than on the individual and independent side.

Whatever we have, we have been given to share

The intercommunion we all have as Church and as members of Christ's Body is now interpreted in a global and all-inclusive manner. The basis and the scope of our compassion have grown. Fully and properly appreciated, charity remains the energy and driving force within social justice, but our basic call to charity as kindness has become our abiding duty to heed the claims of others upon us.

In Christianity the role of priest is interwoven with those of prophet and ruler or king. Since the Second Vatican Council, we are more aware that the role of priest is organic with these other roles given in baptism. Participating in Christ, we all reflect his identity as a priest who prays and offers sacrifice to God, as a prophet who preaches the gospel

to the poor (and to everyone else), and as a king who leads, guides and protects his people. Jesus is also the great *friend* who gives his life for his friends, that is, for us, in the Church and far beyond.[6] If the prophet calls out for justice, it is also the ruler or king who demands just and fair relations with others, especially where justice has been lacking in the past. Power or authority, as we may understand them in a modern democracy, is power to be shared and authority that respects equality and inclusion.

The Charity of Your Prayers

A priest friend of mine often used the phrase *the charity of your prayers*. There is a lovingness or loving kindness in the gentle thoughts and memories that we have of others, especially in the forgiveness we may silently give them. We may even deliberately soften our memories of others or give up unkind judgments we may have harboured toward them. To pray for someone is to give up any bitterness or harshness toward them. With prayer, we can work on our compassion and on the basic lovingness of our nature. We become childlike and, in this sense, Christ-like as well. We may learn to approach the world with a kind of naïveté that is begotten of a higher wisdom.

Practising *karuna*, a Buddhist may believe that he or she will increase in *bodhi*, or enlightenment, as well. Following Christ, for Christians, should give us a kindness and depth of wisdom, and even knowledge, that a university degree in theology or philosophy would never provide without the practice of loving faith in action. *Agape* or *caritas* can only be earned through sacrificial action. This kind of action requires practice and sharing. Putting a cheque in an envelope is never enough, and the generous Christian donor knows this. One must in some way put oneself on the line, *put one's own skin in the game*, so to speak.

The Christian must learn to live with the idea that he or she has never given enough. I can serve a meal or two at a downtown mission or halfway house, but then I go home for my own dinner, knowing that no homeless person, mental patient or ex-convict is going to be eating at my supper table. My presence among the outcasts of society is very minimal. When I write a cheque for some charity, I know it could be for twice as

[6] See Sallie McFargue, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 177–190; and Anne E. Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 143: 'Sallie McFague offers the image of God as "friend", a human metaphor that is startling in its suggestion of some genuine equality between human beings and God, in contrast to the hierarchical image of parent and child'.

much, and still not cut into my budget for meals, movies or beverages. I have never cancelled a vacation and sent the money to help the missions. I can begin to feel pride in knowing that I gave more than someone else, but there is always something further that Jesus would have done.

I need to become more convinced that prayer changes things: prayer really helps. When I hear about a particular missionary and her work, or help sponsor a group of students who want to spend a vacation installing water pipes in some remote village, I have something concrete to pray about. I may then help fix the plumbing of a close neighbour. I may add my nearby needy ones to my prayers or ask the question: for whom should I be praying? Where is my compassion for local people in need? Care and concern need to be brought before God in prayer, even as I try to think of a concrete action I can perform in order to improve a situation. I can grow to be more on the lookout for friends and neighbours in need.

Be Generous in Your Priesthood

The same priest who used to thank us for the charity of our prayers would also remark at another priest's funeral Mass that the departed had always been *generous in his priesthood*. It meant that the priest whose life we were celebrating was anxious to use his priestly vocation and talents on behalf of others. The priest in question was first to offer to say the early Mass, or to say an extra Mass for the boy scouts, or assign a younger priest to celebrate Christmas Midnight Mass or the Easter Vigil. He volunteered without being asked for confessions, sick calls or hospital duty when another priest had a cold or the flu. He exemplified the virtues that he recommended to others.

It is often at the demand or instigation of another that our compassion is brought out. The gracious and compassionate example of others models for us the actions that we ourselves should emulate. St Paul is recommending sympathy and benevolence to us when he writes: 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 2:5). Each of us knows a senior citizen or able-bodied retired person who takes less-able people to the doctor, or to the hair salon, or out grocery shopping. I might sometimes do these things, somewhat reluctantly, but I know somebody else who does them quite frequently and almost gladly. I might ring the doorbell of someone housebound just at teatime with a cake box or a bag of cookies in hand. When old people do not receive many visits from others, a visit from me might just mean a great deal to

them. Listening to people as they speak about their simple lives and small concerns may take some patience on my part—but then how really important to the universe are my own tasks and troubles?

Generosity often goes with humour or light-heartedness. I like to think that Jesus had a sense of humour and avoided thinking morose thoughts, even when he had insights into the circumstances of his own death. *Pretty soon these disciples are going to realise we have to feed this multitude, and how upset and confused are they going to become?* Or, a bit more darkly, *Just wait until these good followers of mine begin to understand that the Son of Man must suffer and die to fulfil his Father's will!* Did Jesus have a spot of humour in his mind when, at the scene of the first miracle, he says to his mother 'My hour has not yet come'. Inside himself he might also be saying *Oh, brother, my public life and all that will ensue are beginning right now!*

Compassion, Beauty and Sacrifice

When one person helps another, or when somebody expresses sympathy for somebody else, these events are said to be beautiful in some way. In a wider sense, when a person joins or fits into a group in a useful and wholesome way, that too is beautiful to behold. Psalm 133:1 tells us, 'How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!' There is beauty in the kindness and compassion that cement together the various relationships comprising an intentional community.

The Good Samaritan, *by G. F. Watts, 1850*

When the Good Samaritan takes the time to minister to the victim of highway thieves and thugs, he is showing the priestly compassion that has not been manifested by the priest and the Levite in the gospel story. Compassion implies the readiness to go out of one's way

to minister to someone in need. People's needs for our help usually do not show up at convenient times. An emergency or crisis is not a visit by appointment or a prearranged event.

There is a connection between compassion and the idea of sacrifice. The idea of sacrifice implies that what I do—and what I truly value—is not all about me: it is maybe not about me at all. The idea of sacrifice implies, rather, that life is all about others and what I can do for them. Sacrifice involves emotional, psychological and spiritual maturity. What I do to benefit myself is only a side effect of what I do primarily to benefit others. What a father or mother does for himself or herself is first of all a side effect of what they do to enhance, educate, provide for and protect the family. The good of the family as a whole and of the spouse and children comes before the good of the individual married person.

The priest experiences his or her joy and fulfilment as a by-product of the service and ministry that he or she gives to the people served. The mature and integrated priest's or minister's life is characterized by a compassion in which he or she suffers with others and co-experiences with them the real feelings that they have. Sacrifice means, literally, *to make something holy*, because it also means suffering for the sake of promoting wholeness in the fabric of a social organism. I put the group first and I put the others first, and, in so doing, I experience the fulfilment of a servant, partner and participant. Everyone who does a job well, or serves a cause bigger than themselves, tastes this fulfilment and experiences this maturity. We become authentic by becoming other-centred.

Emulate the Givers around Us

Let us notice who the caregivers and caretakers are in our surroundings. Support them. Learn from them. Who are the people who absorb the shocks, hurts and hints of negativity in the environment; set a positive and generous tone; absorb and defeat negativity; give life to others with what they say and do? Without fully intending to, I can slip into an attitude of criticism and scepticism that begins to take people down instead of building them up. Imitate the community builders, and not the *wet blankets* in the community. Find those who bring out the best in us and others, and find ways of supporting them. Give gentle consolation in the name of compassion.

Find the point at which compassion passes over from being a passive attitude into active engagement. Consider the phrases *contemplation in*

action and *compassion in action*. Let these become our watchwords. Let us practise doing things that are kind and generous, but that do not bring us notice or acclaim from others. Let the compassion in us become the real us. We are not authentically ourselves anymore unless what we say and do are benefiting somebody else or the group as a whole. Let us give credit generously to those who deserve it. And let us avoid thinking about slights and hurts to ourselves.

Compassion and Vocation

Anyone with a baptismal vocation should be praying for the gift of compassion, looking for examples of compassion in scripture and collecting samples of this virtue from those who exemplify it in their daily living. Our view of politics should be one in which we support the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Beyond this, we will show concern for the poorest of the poor and those who fall through the wider loops of the social safety net. In daily living there are people who make claims on our time and our patience. These are people who need our compassion. Making certain phone calls can be difficult and irksome; make them with compassion and better understanding.

We will show concern for the poorest of the poor

A teacher or faculty member can build compassion by creating different ways for students to learn and succeed. An instructor can come to the library or tutoring centre just in order to meet students who may have questions to answer or assignments to be explained. As a member of a faculty committee, a senior member might take an assignment that is less attractive or prestigious. This is also a good example to other faculty who might be overly ambitious or who are loathe to take assignments that they deem to be below them as they work to achieve a more lofty status.

A great example to a certain scholastic in a religious community came in the form of seeing one of the senior professed stacking dishes that needed to be washed. Small deeds that enhance family or community are rooted in fellow feeling and compassion, and they result in strengthening the sense of vocation in many others. News gets around the wider family that one family group postponed their holiday until they finished helping another household move to a new home. This is a kind thing to do, but it also strengthens the spiritual bonds in the family and beyond.

Whatever else we teach, let us teach compassion, concern for others and putting others first. Let us make this the hallmark of maturity and

integration for ourselves. Let us make new friends and spend more time with people who are less powerful and prestigious than ourselves. There was a line in an old poem that said: 'Let all men count with you, but none too much'.[7] The virtues do not work independently of one another. Compassion works integrally with other virtues. It works well with humility, poverty and obedience, when these virtues are properly understood. It works organically with justice and fairness as well. It leads to harmony and mutual service in the Body of Christ. Compassion is the wisdom of Christ and the wisdom of the priesthood. It is the key to understanding prophecy, preaching, authority and leadership as well!

Robert E. Doud is emeritus professor of philosophy and religious studies at Pasadena City College in California. He has a particular interest in bringing together philosophy and poetry, using poetry to offer insight into philosophy and philosophy as a tool in interpreting poetry. His articles have appeared in *Process Studies*, *Review for Religious*, *The Journal of Religion*, *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Philosophy Today*, *The Thomist*, *Religion and Literature*, *Horizons*, *Soundings* and *Existentia*.

[7] The poem is 'If', by Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936). It is quite sexist in its diction, and is thus not included in many modern anthologies. However, it contains many apt expressions and reflections, especially as related to Victorian Anglo-Saxon Stoicism.

MARIE MADELEINE D'HOUËT AND THE JESUITS

Teresa White

THE VENERABLE Marie Madeleine d'Houët founded the Society of the Faithful Companions of Jesus in Amiens, France in 1820. Today, in their bicentenary year, the Faithful Companions are remembering and retelling the story of their origins, and in doing so they are coming to a deeper understanding of some of the circumstances that shaped that story.

Through her contact with a number of Jesuits from the College of Saint Acheul in Amiens, Marie Madeleine gradually became convinced that God was calling her, as she put it, 'to be Jesuit'.[1] She did not mean formal membership of the Society of Jesus—today she would probably have said 'Ignatian' rather than 'Jesuit'—but she was strongly attracted to the Jesuit Rule, admiring the fruits she saw that it had produced in those who lived by it.

Knowing this, Marie-Félix Folloppe SJ, a member of the Saint Acheul community, gave her a summary of the Jesuit *Constitutions*, saying, 'I am sure God wishes you to embrace this Rule and wishes me to give it to you, although that is something that is usually forbidden. Copy it, and do not speak of it; when the time comes, you will have it at hand.'[2] Marie Madeleine did copy this summary, and when she drew up the Rule of Life for her own Society, she ensured that it conformed to that of the Jesuits, only omitting, as she said, '… all that regards the sacred ministry and the sciences'.[3]

For the Faithful Companions of Jesus, this episode has become part of their shared remembrance of Marie Madeleine's commitment to the wisdom enshrined in the Jesuit Rule, which she saw as the firm basis upon which her Society could grow and flourish. Within the framework of that Rule, her vision was that she and her companions would respond to

[1] Marie Madeleine d'Houët, *Mémoires and Memoirs*, edited by Mary Rose Rawlinson and others, translated by Patricia Grogan and Susan Cawley (London: privately printed, 2018), 21.
[2] D'Houët, *Mémoires and Memoirs*, 47.
[3] D'Houët, *Mémoires and Memoirs*, 239.

Marie Madeleine d'Houët, *by Henri Pinta*

the 'I thirst' of Jesus through the apostolate of education, retreats and missions.

However, in spite of Marie Madeleine's desire to respond to her calling wholeheartedly, the early years proved to be complicated and challenging. Many of the difficulties she faced were caused by the volatile political situation in France, which had been intentionally de-Christianised and torn apart by the Revolution of 1789. Her problems were exacerbated, however, by the hostility of a number of powerful Gallican bishops, who were not slow to show their disapproval of the foundress and her Society.[4] As a result, for many years the expansion of the Faithful Companions of Jesus in France was severely restricted, and Marie Madeleine was obliged to close a number of her French establishments.[5] At the same time, she was well aware that her struggles with the Gallican clergy were intensified by the Jesuits, who, though they did not support the Gallican position, nevertheless used their influence to increase the bishops' fear that the Faithful Companions would be prepared to act independently of their wishes.

Fraught Relationship with the Jesuits

Not long after Marie Madeleine's death in 1858, the sisters introduced the Cause for her canonization. Following normal ecclesiastical procedures, they requested written evidence of their foundress's sanctity, and more than a thousand depositions or sworn testimonies were collected and

[4] Gallicans wanted a strong measure of independence from Rome, and sought to restrain the Pope's authority in favour of that of local bishops. Marie Madeleine took the opposite stance: she acknowledged and accepted papal authority before that of the local French bishops and clergy.

[5] These closures led her to look for suitable locations in other parts of Europe, and eventually she went to London, and later to Turin, Switzerland and Ireland, where she set up schools and orphanages.

eventually printed in a document known as the *Positio*.[6] A surprising number of these testimonies refer to the hostility of the Jesuits towards the Faithful Companions, which continued even after both the Society and its name had received full papal approval.[7]

Perhaps part of the problem was Marie Madeleine's own personality and character—she was reputed to be very strong-minded, a trait apparently not appreciated by the Jesuits of her time. This perception is confirmed by Marie de Bussy fcJ (1813–1895), the third Superior General, who in her testimony includes a quotation from an unnamed Jesuit: 'Madame d'Houët has such a strong will that if she wanted to be named Pope, she would succeed!' But strong will or not, after the foundation of her Society, Marie Madeleine made little headway with the Jesuits.

What she wanted was permission for her congregation to follow her modified version of the Rule of St Ignatius '… because this Rule seems to us to be the best adapted to lead to perfection. One would wish the Reverend Jesuit Fathers to be less possessive of this holy Rule.'[8] The Jesuits, however, were not open to dialogue on this issue, and the longed-for permission was indefinitely deferred. The name of the Society was also a bone of contention, but in this case Marie Madeleine apparently decided to press on regardless of Jesuit censure. A testimony submitted by a certain Madame Jeanne de Roquefeuil makes this abundantly clear:

> The name 'Faithful Companions of Jesus' displeased them [the Jesuits], since it was very similar to their own designation, and carried with it a kind of compromise that they did not want to accept. However, Madame d'Houët never thought herself obliged to defer to the opinions of the Jesuit Fathers on this matter.

Jeanne adds a significant detail about her friend's connection with the Jesuits: 'She never had any intention of following them slavishly; there is something military about the Company of Jesus according to the spirit of its Founder, and this was always foreign to the mentality of Madame d'Houët'.[9]

[6] *Beatificationis et canonizationis servae Dei Mariae Magdalenae de Bengy vice-comitissae De Bonnault d'Houet fundatricis Societatis sororum fidelium sociarum Jesu. Positio super validitate processuum* (Rome: Guerra et Belli, 1937) (hereafter *Positio*).

[7] Leo XII, in 1826, issued a *Brief of Praise* for the Society, and Gregory XVI a *Decree of Praise and Approbation* in 1837. Both these popes formally authorised the name Faithful Companions of Jesus.

[8] D'Houët, *Mémoires and Memoirs*, 356.

[9] *Positio*, volume 1, 24. The original Spanish name, Compañia de Jesus, was Latinised as Societas Jesu and became in English the Society of Jesus. The name remains Compagnie de Jésus in French and Compagnia di Gesù in Italian.

Persistent Jesuit Opposition

In her testimony, Anna Ennever fcJ (1826–1895) sums up in a single sentence what she considers to be the fundamental reason for Marie Madeleine's difficulties with the Jesuits: 'They could not believe God would call women to follow the rule which he had given to Saint Ignatius for his Company'.[10] Other entries make the same point, and I am drawn to them not simply because they make it clear that the Jesuits made our foundress's life extremely stressful, but because these men seemed dismissive of a project which in many respects they themselves, through their spiritual guidance, had initiated.

In his testimony, Canon Constans d'Auvergne writes that Marie Madeleine was only too well aware of this anomaly:

> Madame d'Houët told me that once when she was explaining to Père Varin how difficult it was for her to get her work off the ground because of problems raised by the Jesuits, she reminded him that it was he who had taken the initiative in her regard. Père Varin responded: 'You will never have more persistent adversaries than ourselves'. But he added, 'Keep going all the same …'.[11]

By turns, she was encouraged by these men, then 'tormented' (her word) by them, before finally being abandoned by them.[12] Maria Mollet fcJ (1852–1935) quotes an example of the bitter Jesuit opposition to which the Faithful Companions were subjected: 'Père Guidée SJ said to Mère Marie de Bussy that he would turn young women away from entering with us. "If I go to Nantes", he said, "it will be to destroy the Society of the Faithful Companions of Jesus".' These were strong words indeed.

Though in her heart Marie Madeleine was unwavering in her desire that her Society's Rule of Life should be based on the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus, once the hostility of the Jesuits became so marked, she seemed to accept the impasse and no longer continued to struggle for permission to use the Jesuit Rule. Finding herself caught up in the intricacies of arrogance, canon law and church politics, it was only with God's help that she was able to retain her peace and serenity in those arid times.

[10] *Positio*, volume 1, 79.
[11] D'Houët, *Mémoires and Memoirs*, 29.
[12] D'Houët, *Mémoires and Memoirs*, 29.

A Frustrating Relationship: Marie Madeleine and Joseph Varin SJ

In the early days, several French Jesuits, including Louis Sellier, Marie-Félix Folloppe and Julien Druilhet, played a significant role in the life of Marie Madeleine (then a young widow with a school-age son) and in the discernment of her future vocation. In Faithful Companions of Jesus legend, however, the one with whose name we are most familiar is Joseph Varin. Anna Ennever writes of Marie Madeleine's frustrating relationship with this man:

> The Servant of God showed great fortitude in enduring the painful ordeals which marked the beginning of the Society. She had chosen Père Varin as her director, and sometimes he pushed her forward, sometimes held her back, showing her that what she believed to be the will of God was no more than an illusion.[13]

In her testimony, Marie Joseph Bouque fcJ (1817–1897) quotes Marie Madeleine's own view of Père Varin: 'He was the gentlest of men, but he made me suffer greatly'.[14]

Born in 1769, Varin was twelve years older than Marie Madeleine, and he died at the age of 81 in 1850, eight years before her. He it was who had first suggested to her that God might be calling her to religious life, and he saw fit to test her vocation by putting her through many trials. In the appendix to Marie Madeleine's *Memoirs*, there is an additional note under Père Varin's name. While 'the holiness of this zealous priest' is acknowledged, the early sisters were in no doubt that his guidance of their foundress left much to be desired:

> He never clearly understood God's designs in her regard and was inclined to discount the extraordinary lights with which she was favoured. He spared no effort in persuading her to join the Society of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, which he had begun in 1802. On Holy Thursday 1820 he finally authorised her to attempt a foundation.[15]

In her testimony, Maria Mollet fcJ writes that Père Varin, having vigorously obstructed Marie Madeleine's attempts to strengthen her Society in its early years, from 1823 onwards made virtually no further contact with her or the Faithful Companions for the rest of his life.[16]

[13] *Positio*, volume 1, 73.
[14] *Positio*, volume 1, 75.
[15] D'Houët, *Mémoires and Memoirs*, 283.
[16] *Positio*, volume 1, 129.

At the beginning of the first volume of a lengthy history of the Jesuits in nineteenth-century France, there is a full-page engraving of Père Joseph Varin.[17] Unsmiling, he is sitting in a relaxed manner, eyes cast down, arms serenely crossed over his middle: he could be praying, reflecting or perhaps listening attentively to one of his numerous directees. One wonders if the author of this history, Joseph Burnichon SJ, by placing that picture at the start of his book, even before the introduction, wished to highlight his perception that Père Varin dominated French Jesuit history during the nineteenth century, or at least in the years covered by volume 1: 1814–1830.

Perhaps, in his eyes, Varin, who had been an active member of the Fathers of the Faith and who formally became a Jesuit novice at the age of 46 in 1814, the year of the restoration of the Society of Jesus, symbolized the élan of the Jesuits in France after 41 years of suppression.[18] Certainly, Père Varin's name appears frequently in the book, with the author paying tribute to his 'spiritual insight' and applauding his 'special gift' for helping future foundresses of religious institutes (the Society of the Sacred Heart, the Sainte Famille Congregation, the Notre Dame Sisters) to 'discover' their vocation.[19]

To the reader from the Faithful Companions of Jesus, it is rather galling to find that only twice in the course of this long historical record is the name of Joseph Varin linked with that of Marie Madeleine. Burnichon mentions the fact that during the 'Hundred Days' in 1815, (when Napoleon, whose government

[17] Joseph Burnichon, *La Compagnie de Jésus en France : histoire d'un siècle, 1814–1914*, 4 volumes (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1914–1922).

[18] The Fathers of the Faith were a group of priests founded after the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773. Their way of life was based on the Jesuit model and its members had the explicit intention of entering the Society of Jesus when it was restored. As they travelled through post-Revolutionary France, attending to the spiritual needs of the people, the ministry of these priests was condemned by Napoleon and several of them were placed under house arrest.

[19] Burnichon, *Compagnie de Jésus en France*, volume 1, 106.

censured the ministry of priests and religious, briefly returned to power before his final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo), Père Varin, being obliged to keep a low profile, had found refuge in a manor house, not far from Bourges, belonging to a certain Madame de Bonnault d'Houët. He adds that this lady had later founded the Society of the Faithful Companions of Jesus in Amiens. Her Rule, he says, borrowed from that of St Ignatius, was approved successively by Leo XII in 1826 and Gregory XVI in 1837.[20] He recognises that Père Varin and several of his Jesuit colleagues had been 'very actively' involved in the beginnings of the Faithful Companions, but ends by saying, somewhat dismissively:

> Indeed, the venerable foundress, having received from Père Varin the initial motivation to follow God's call, found herself in some disagreement with him in establishing this Society, which seemed to him to replicate that of the Sacred Heart.[21]

Burnichon appears to accept Père Varin's view that the Society of the Faithful Companions of Jesus was not really needed, nor does he make further mention of our Society.[22]

A Cry from the Heart

Marie Madeleine's reaction when the Jesuits were actively hostile towards her and her Society was truly heroic. Faithful Companions of today might well find it hard to admire her humble acceptance of the way they treated her, and I am probably not alone in saying that I would prefer her to have been more assertive, as indeed she had been in an interview with the Jesuit Superior General in Rome in 1837.

She suffered deeply from their harshness and lack of understanding, but she did not blame or condemn them. There is one handwritten document, preserved in the Faithful Companions of Jesus archives, in which Marie Madeleine expresses something of the deep anguish she

[20] It is true that both these popes granted formal approval of the Faithful Companions of Jesus Society and of its name (see note 7 above) but, owing to pressure from the Jesuits, the Holy See deferred definitive approval of Marie Madeleine's Rule.

[21] Burnichon, *Compagnie de Jésus en France*, volume 1, 107.

[22] Some years after the publication of his book, the author must have been invited to submit a testimony for Marie Madeleine's Cause. This is what he wrote: 'In the course of my studies for my work on the History of the Company of Jesus in France in the nineteenth century, I came across a reference to the Servant of God. Concerning Père de Bengy, of the Company of Jesus, victim of the Commune, I came across a picture of his aunt, the countess [*sic*] de Bonnault d'Houët. I have to say that at the time I had not been particularly drawn to look more deeply into the work of Mme d'Houët and I was completely unaware of her difficulties with the Society of Jesus.'

felt on account of the long-drawn-out animosity of the Jesuits towards her Society. Perhaps she thought her words would never see the light of day, but Mary Magdalen Harding fcJ (1877–1928), from her reading of the archival material available to her, discovered this brief text and included it in her testimony. I quote it here, almost in full:

> We owe much to the Jesuit Fathers who created or formed us, but we owe them still more because far and wide they have pursued us, persecuted us and driven us out; I feel this more than I can say: they have humiliated us, separated us from everything, and in doing so, have forced us to place our hope in God alone …. The Jesuits persecute us in these ways: 1) by turning the bishops against us, before or as soon as they arrive in their dioceses; 2) by preventing those who wish to give themselves to God from entering with us; 3) by doing the same thing in the case of parents wishing to send their children to us as boarders …. God seems to have placed the Jesuit Fathers at the doors of all our houses as vigilant guards, to prevent the world, its pride and its illusions, from entering them …. Finally, since in following our Lord Jesus Christ we must be persecuted and carry the cross, it is expedient that it is the Jesuit Fathers who give us this cross to carry, for we respect them too much to complain about them, and when we feel we want to do this, their virtue, which is so well-known, and the high reputation they enjoy, completely prevent our doing so …. The Sisters Faithful Companions of Jesus have the honour of most humbly saluting the Fathers of the Company of Jesus, and they beg them on bended knee to kindly ask God, on behalf of the Sisters, for the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ which animates them—and without which our beautiful name would be meaningless—so that the Sisters may bear, as they do, the fruits of justice and holiness for themselves, for the children in their schools and for all that it will please God to ask of them ….[23]

A Wider Perspective

A wider perspective on this rare outpouring of sheer grief and hurt on the part of Marie Madeleine is given in a later entry in the *Positio*, written (possibly in the 1930s) by Yves de la Brière SJ (1877–1941). The following is an excerpt from this long testimony:

> The opposition of the Jesuit Fathers was motivated by the fear of appearing to favour a type of foundation that St Ignatius had always refused to accept and which, since his death, the Company had perseveringly rejected: the institution of a religious family which

[23] *Positio*, volume 1, 153–154.

> would be as it were a female counterpart of the Company of Jesus. Fathers Varin and Sellier visibly feared being accused of encouraging such an attempt in any way. Hence the extreme severity of their treatment of Madame d'Houët and the Faithful Companions of Jesus—a severity in keeping with the austere, firm and inflexible traditions which characterised the bearing and the method of religious direction of these former Fathers of the Faith. In the next generation, not only did the painful relationship between the Jesuits and the Faithful Companions of Jesus completely disappear, but a sympathetic and regular collaboration was established between the two religious families from then on, wherever an appropriate occasion presented itself. At the time, the measures taken were an attempt to preclude error and confusion, canonically and verbally, between the two religious Institutes …. For a hundred years, religious needs, social needs, and general customs have seen the creation of numerous women's congregations, inspired by the rules of St Ignatius … and indeed on many points their rules are literally the same. These congregations, though not affiliated to the Company of Jesus, are in a consistent way clearly evolving within its zone of spiritual influence. In short, what the virtuous foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus desired has today been achieved by many female teaching or other congregations, and this seems absolutely normal, natural and legitimate. It addresses the authentic demands of the good of souls in the face of new ways of living and new circumstances.[24]

In concluding his testimony, de la Brière suggests that Marie Madeleine's long, painful experience of Jesuit opposition had its own spiritual reward: it made her more humble and helped her develop the heroic virtues that are a clear sign of sanctity!

The Early Faithful Companions and the Jesuits in England

Anastasia Magill fcJ (1855–1945), in her testimony, makes an interesting point about what certain Jesuits outside France thought about the French Jesuits' treatment of Marie Madeleine.[25] She states that, in England, she had herself heard some of them criticize Père Varin, whose doubts and hesitations about Marie Madeleine's foundation were motivated, she says, by 'the concern of the Jesuit Fathers not to allow a work distinct from theirs, and above all a community of women, to infiltrate their Company'.[26]

[24] *Positio*, volume 1, 158.
[25] Jesuit hostility towards Marie Madeleine and the Faithful Companions of Jesus was strong in France, where it all began, but the approach of the central leadership of the Society of Jesus in Rome was equally unyielding.
[26] *Positio*, volume 1, 116.

It seems that some of the English Jesuits even went so far as to tell Anastasia that they were 'shocked by the behaviour of their French brothers'. However, when the Faithful Companions went to London in 1830, at first they found the Jesuits there guarded and unhelpful, as they had been in France. Maria Mollet offers a reason for their unfriendly attitude. She says that the then Jesuit Provincial in England, Father Edward Scott, 'was unfavourable to us for some time, and later apologised for this, saying: "I was following orders"'. From then on, Father Scott encouraged the sisters very much and said one day to Mère Julie:

> Do not be surprised at the interest I take in your Society, for on seeing you for the first time I heard an interior voice which said to me: 'Welcome these persons warmly, they will do good. God has sent them for the good of this country and for his glory.' [27]

A rather surprising detail comes from Marie Joseph Bouque, who adds the following note to her testimony: 'One day, a Jesuit Father who was preaching a retreat in England told us that Père Varin was very happy about the prosperity of our Society'.[28]

By 1850, the year of the restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales, the Faithful Companions were settled and well regarded in London (in Somers Town and Isleworth), and in Liverpool (as they were, too, in Limerick, Ireland). Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman, the first Archbishop of Westminster, who, according to Père Stanislaus' biography of Marie Madeleine, 'was a staunch and loyal friend to the Faithful Companions of Jesus', warmly welcomed religious men and women into the Diocese of Westminster, and counted on their support as he tried to build up the newly recognised Catholic community.[29]

He was particularly appreciative of the energetic pastoral and educational strategies of the Jesuits, who set up missions in different parts of the country. In a letter to the editor of a Scottish newspaper, *The Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser*, dated 3 December 1850, the anonymous writer (a Catholic, but clearly not an admirer of the Jesuits) makes an astonishing statement: 'London now swarms with Jesuits, male and female—the latter, termed Faithful Companions of Jesus, have a convent in Isleworth, near Richmond'. What is interesting here is that

[27] *Positio*, volume 1, 116.
[28] *Positio*, volume 1, 75.
[29] Father Stanislaus, *Life of the Viscountess de Bonnault D'Houet, Foundress of the Society of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, 1781–1858* (London: Longman's Green, 1916), 172 note 1.

in London, in Marie Madeleine's lifetime, the Faithful Companions of Gumley House, Isleworth, were evidently seen as female Jesuits! Père Varin had died earlier that year—one wonders what he would have made of such an appellation had he read this letter ….

'If God Is for Us …'

The Faithful Companions of Jesus are called to 'stand at the foot of the cross … to be one with Jesus in his thirst for the coming of the kingdom'.[30] These words reflect what Marie Madeleine had said, not long before the foundation of the Society in 1820:

> My name is Madeleine; I wish to be like my patron saint who loved Jesus her Master so truly that she looked after his needs and accompanied him in his travels, even to the foot of the Cross, with the other holy women who did not, like the apostles, abandon him but proved to be his Faithful Companions.[31]

In her life there is abundant evidence that her response to God's call brought consolation, but also much suffering. Many of the difficulties she experienced could not have been unexpected—they were all part of the normal complications that anyone must face in starting something new. What was incomprehensible to her was the relentless opposition of the French Jesuits to a project to which they had initially given their support.

After her second visit to Rome in 1837, having consulted the Pope, she no longer felt obliged to seek the guidance of these men as she had done so meticulously until then, and Jesuit hostility, though it continued, seemed to affect her less forcibly. Seeing the success of a great number of the Faithful Companions' apostolic endeavours, together with the expansion of her Society that took place in later years, she knew that *le bon Dieu* had walked with her, guiding her, directing her. 'If God is for us, who is against us? … Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution …?' (Romans 8:31 and 35)

Marie Madeleine's desire for her Society to use the Jesuit *Constitutions* was not fulfilled in her lifetime nor, indeed, for many decades afterwards. It was not until 1983 that the then Superior General of the Jesuits, Pedro Arrupe, granted the Faithful Companions of Jesus permission to

[30] *Constitutions of the Faithful Companions of Jesus* (Broadstairs: FCJ, 1985),
[31] D'Houët, *Mémoires and Memoirs*, 61.

incorporate the essential elements of the ten-part Jesuit *Constitutions* into their Rule of Life. Accordingly, Marie Madeleine's first version of the Faithful Companions' *Constitutions* was completely revised and, with some modifications, finally approved by the Holy See and the Jesuits in 1985. In 2020, after more than thirty years of using them, Faithful Companions of Jesus sisters recognise with gratitude that they have received great benefits from the Ignatian tradition and from the Jesuit *Constitutions*. Yet they are also keenly aware that, as women, they respond to and live the dynamic of those *Constitutions*, written by a man for men, according to their own experience and sensibilities, and that they are still in process of absorbing and interiorising them.

Animated by the interior spirit of the Society of Jesus**,** the Faithful Companions' seed was planted in the soil of post-Revolution France: it put down roots, and gradually grew from tiny shoot, to sapling, to young tree, to mature tree with a firm trunk and many branches. Over two hundred years not all the branches have flourished, and some pruning has taken place, but all through those years the roots have been tended—it is through them that the tree draws nourishment—and there has been new growth, new apostolic endeavours, new ways of responding to God's call.

So our bicentenary is a time for shared remembrance, and we rejoice in what the Faithful Companions have, by the grace of God, been able to accomplish, in spite of strong opposition in the early years; but it is also a time for looking towards what will surely be a very different future. Our identity is expressed in our name, and as Faithful Companions of Jesus we know there is nothing intermittent about faithfulness—it is a relationship that continues. We are 'on mission' when our life (who we are) and action (what we do) prophetically point to, promote and make visible the Reign of God. With the Jesuits, we share the mission of the universal Church: to proclaim the Good News of God's love revealed in Jesus Christ. Today, we live in times of great change, as Marie Madeleine did in her day, and like her, we believe that *le Bon Dieu*, who led our Society in the past, is leading us now, and will lead us in the years to come.

Teresa White fcJ belongs to the Faithful Companions of Jesus. A former teacher, she spent many years in the ministry of spirituality at Katherine House, a retreat and conference centre run by her congregation in Salford.

The FURROW

A JOURNAL FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

***The Furrow*, founded in 1950, is a pastoral journal which publishes articles on:**

- ***Liturgy, prayer and spirituality***
- ***Sexuality and social justice***
- ***Reform of Church structures, including the role of women***
- ***Contemporary dialogue between faith and culture***

Features include: *Notes for preaching; Chronicle of current events; serious book reviews*

Editor: Ronan Drury, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, to whom editorial correspondence should be addressed.

Rates: Single copy: €2.75 (£1.90) (+ VAT €.37), postage €0.95; Annual Subscription: Republic of Ireland €50.00. Northern Ireland £35.00. Great Britain €58.00/£38.00. Foreign €65.00/$75.00/Stg£45.00; Student rate: €33.00/$43.00/£28.00

Subscriptions are payable in advance to:

The Secretary, *The Furrow*, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, co. Kildare, Republic of Ireland.

Telephone: 7083741, fax: 7083908 (national code 01, international code +353 1).

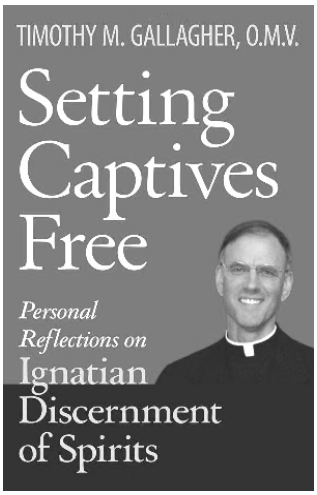
E mail: furrow.office@may.ie

NOVATE VOBIS NOVALE

Back numbers and advertising rates are available from the Secretary.

RECENT BOOKS

Timothy M. Gallagher, *Setting Captives Free: Personal Reflections on Ignatian Discernment of Spirits* (New York: Crossroad, 2018). 978 0 8245 9907 2, pp.256, £23.99.



Few authors in the anglophone world of the twenty-first century have contributed more to Ignatian studies than Timothy M. Gallagher. Although he has written on many aspects of Ignatian spirituality, he is associated most readily with the topic of discernment. Readers of *The Way* are likely to be familiar with at least some of his works. His methodology is easily recognisable: a subtle interweaving of close textual analysis of the *Spiritual Exercises* with multiple illustrations from the life experience of a wide variety of people. This approach has always resulted in books that are relatively easy to read, yet founded on sound scholarship—books that are reliable and usable in the reader's own life and in the ministry of spiritual direction.

In 2005 Gallagher wrote *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living*. This was an exploration of the first fourteen Rules for the Discernment of Spirits as presented in the *Spiritual Exercises*—those described by Ignatius as 'more suitable for the First Week'. The work was systematic and scholarly, but made accessible through the copious illustrations accompanying the argument. It marked Gallagher as an expert in the field as well as a skilful pedagogue. Thirteen years later he has returned to these rules and offers further reflections on their meaning and their applicability. He realises that people will wonder what has motivated this return, and what fresh contribution *Setting Captives Free* will make to the subject. Has he a different goal in this second book? Has his methodology changed in any way? What has he learned over the intervening years that is worth communicating to readers? He deals with such legitimate questions in his introduction (pp.vi–xi).

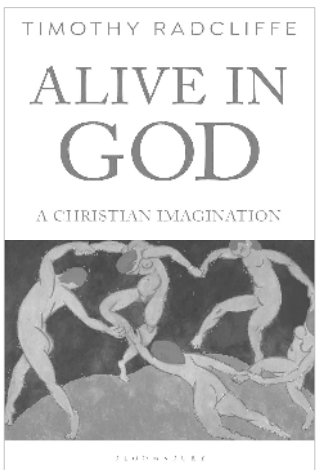
Those already familiar with the earlier book will be helped by reading these explanatory pages. But there is already a clue to one significant difference in the new book's subtitle: *Personal Reflections on Ignatian Discernment of Spirits*. While Gallagher still calls on what he has learned (and carefully recorded) from his interactions with other people—whether in retreats, ongoing spiritual direction, or workshops on the Rules—here he also calls on his own personal experience, as noted in his journals. This autobiographical dimension, while by no means intrusive, adds further richness and, one might even say, authenticity to what he teaches. A certain parallel can be seen between the way in which this book evolved and how Ignatius composed the *Spiritual Exercises*—drawing both on his own personal experience at Manresa and on what he had learned through his ministry of spiritual conversation with others.

There is a certain leisurely character to Gallagher's writing. He does not aim to be succinct and is not afraid of some repetition. And when it comes to examples, three will usually be better than one! The image of the author in live-teaching mode—leading workshops or seminars, constantly seeking reactions and questions from his class—repeatedly springs to mind. In his writing also he is looking to enter into dialogue with his readers. He is inviting them to resist any inclination to rush through the book just to get to the end. What he wants is for them to pause frequently and ponder how their own experience is echoed in what they are reading. This experience will include both their personal inner lives and what they have encountered in ministry. Reading this book can be said to have a contemplative dimension to it.

Gallagher tells us in the introduction that the book's main title, *Setting Captives Free* (Luke 4:18), 'expresses its basic message' (p.xi). This insight provides readers with a lens through which to read the text, or with a key to open up its message. The entire careful exposition of the fourteen rules, along with myriad examples, serve the purpose of freeing readers, and those to whom they minister, from unfreedoms of every kind (some psychological, others more strictly spiritual). And then, of course, will come the longed-for transition under grace, as freedom *from* fears, obsessions and desolations, morphs into freedom *for* love, service and joy. Is this not what we all desire?

Brian O'Leary SJ

Timothy Radcliffe, *Alive in God: A Christian Imagination* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2019). 978 1 4729 7020 6, pp. 432, £12.99.



There is a Horrid Suspicion around that religion, especially Christianity, and most particularly Catholic Christianity, is hostile to any kind of life that is real or enjoyable. Here is a book to challenge that perception, inviting us to use our imagination—understood as a way of seeing the world or, better, as an exciting vision of where we are, rather than as inventing things that do not exist.

Timothy Radcliffe seeks to challenge the reductionist view that is represented by religious fundamentalism or the drearier forms of secularism, and to invite us to 'attend to the real world in all its glorious physicality' (pp. 12–13). The basic argument is that 'we are most likely to excite people with our faith if Christianity is grasped as the invitation to live fully' (p. 259). At the heart of this argument is a strong sense that the Gospels actually encourage us to flourish, and that Catholicism is an adventure, for the sake of which it is worth risking absolutely everything.

The great thing is that Radcliffe, like Pope Francis, 'speaks human', and that means the journey on which this book takes us is fun; this is a long way from the notion (sometimes engendered, it has to be said, by Christian apologists) that Christianity is about *pie in the sky, by and by, when you die*. Rather, it is all about living this present life to the full *in the now*. This book is clear-sighted and refreshingly non-condemnatory in its account of our present-day ills; sometimes the reader is moved to tears. It is untidy in places (the author describes himself towards the end as a 'scruffy friar'!), but real life is also untidy; and this book, like our 'real life', is a continuing journey. Church dogma (a phrase that since the Enlightenment has all too often been employed to batter believers with the implication that we are forbidden to have ideas of our own) is not a prohibition against thinking, but a summons 'to carry on the journey into the infinite mystery of God rather than wandering down some neglected path that leads to a dead end' (p. 145).

Radcliffe is aware of the immense of importance of friendship in the journey that is our life; and he offers some insights and reflections of rare profundity on the matter of violence (pp. 185–201), as well as the beautiful chapter 11 on the meaning of 'home'. Those who find themselves instinctively hostile to the institutional Church, as well as those who may be classed as

'reluctant members', will, I think, be deeply impressed with—even startled by—his presentation of the Church as 'home'.

There is much, more than I can easily say to applaud and to admire in this book: the telling title, for example, of his chapter on Christian Unity, 'The Ecology of Faith', with that all-important question, 'do Christians have to be united?' He captures the mystery in this weighty sentence: 'I can never imagine leaving the Catholic Church, and yet I must recognise that many of the finest Christians whom I know and love could never imagine being a Catholic or Orthodox' (p.230), and then, on the same page, this important insight: 'The challenge for my Catholic tradition is to imagine dissent as fruitful and even necessary'. This is an element of the rich mystery of the Church, in which, as he puts it, '"No" can be a part of "Yes"'. Then, what about the human body? Are not Christians grimly opposed to the body and all its demands? Well, no, actually, for Radcliffe can speak of the 'holiness of the body', which is 'shaped to love' (p.283).

This book is a model of attentive reading of scripture in a way that makes sense of our world and speaks of a God who listens. The author cites a prodigious range of sources, not to show off his erudition (which is considerable, as a matter of fact), but to offer a beautiful and far-ranging meditation on biblical texts. A powerful example is offered in his treatment of the story in Acts 3 of the man who was lame from birth.

Like Pope Francis, Radcliffe is very strong on the threat of the 'technocratic imagination' to the sacramental and, in this context, on the importance of what Christians do when we break bread together, in the eucharistic 'world of gifts' (p.310). He makes a point recently emphasized in the work of Tom Holland, that, 'It was the very folly of the early Christian martyrs that shook the pagan Roman Empire and alerted people to the good news that something new and marvellous was afoot' (p.315).

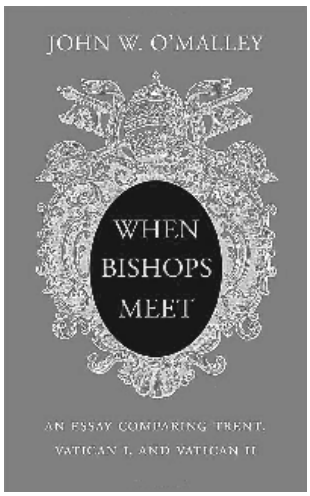
He is highly perceptive on the importance of liturgy, and one might single out for very special mention the remarkable and delightful chapter 17 on 'The Liturgical Imagination', and the importance of liturgical ('providential') time as opposed to the tyranny of technocratic time. Then there is the recollection of a touching moment in his schooldays when he felt 'compelled to kneel in prayer' in the great abbey church at Downside (p.340). He also speaks of the importance of his presence at the death of both his parents (it was a gift both to them and to him), and his far-from-safe visits to Iraq and Algeria. There is a lovely account, which may assist many who get bored with the breviary, of the way in which the Divine Office, starting with Vespers, brings the day together.

This book is a courageous matter of 'asking how we can touch the imagination of our secular contemporaries with our Christian faith' (p.378),

not seeking to prove a hypothesis, but looking for mutual imaginative enrichment. Again and again, Radcliffe insists that nothing human is alien to Christ. That may be the most telling lesson of this remarkable book, which is warmly recommended to all readers of *The Way*.

Nicholas King SJ

John W. O'Malley, *When Bishops Meet: An Essay Comparing Trent, Vatican I, and Vatican II* (Cambridge, Ma: Belknap, 2019). 978 0 6749 8841 5, pp.240, £19.95.



The doyen of historians of the Church's ecumenical councils has penned a remarkable essay placing them alongside each other in an unprecedented compare-and-contrast exercise. *When Bishops Meet* is the fruit of John O'Malley's previous three books (in order of publication) on *Vatican II* (2010), *Trent* (2013) and *Vatican I* (2018), yet very different from each; it is a succinct overview of all three that allows them to illuminate each other. No one has yet looked at and studied the councils 'synchronically rather than, as usual, diachronically' (p.4), says O'Malley, and certainly not systematically, as here. What results is surprising and fruitful; but, given its ambition and scale, the most remarkable thing about *When Bishops Meet* is that it should be so concise, accessible and readable.

O'Malley directs readers to his great monographs for further detail on how each council came to be. But this essay stands on its own, and can easily be followed by the general reader without knowledge of those texts. What matters here is what comes to light when the councils are placed side by side. Trent and Vatican I were separated by three centuries, Vatican I and II by less than a century, yet we see a different universe in terms of mindset. But that, too, is a feature of the 21 ecumenical councils in the Church's history. Beginning with Nicaea in 325, the first eight were called by the Roman emperor, and conducted in Greek. Then, after the Great Schism of 1054, a further thirteen were convoked by the Pope and held in Latin. Of the last thirteen, seven have met in Rome, the last two in the Vatican itself.

The most recent three councils mark the history of Catholicism in the modern age, facing the seismic challenges of the Protestant Reformation (Trent), the French Revolution (Vatican I) and a new secular, pluralistic age

(Vatican II). All three councils wrestled with what O'Malley calls the 'issues-under-the-issues' (p. 7). First, there is the genre in which the councils expressed their decisions: are these gatherings essentially legislative, concerned with good order in the Church, or pastoral and evangelizing—exhorting to holiness—as at Vatican II? Second, how can church teaching develop in response to new historical circumstances? This question first arose in Trent because philology and textual criticism made people aware of discrepancies between past and present. Third comes the question of the relationship of centre to periphery, above all between the papacy and the local churches, and the issue of ecclesial governance more generally: was it hierarchical, collegial or a mix? How is papal primacy to be exercised?

In part one, O'Malley shows the shift from a neo-scholastic myth of changelessness and a historical naïveté that projected present practice on to the past to an embrace of change (at Vatican II), understood as evolving, renewing and refreshing the Church's identity, rescuing it from ossification. The great medieval debate over conciliarism and papal authority was left unresolved at Trent, which was followed by a loss of papal prestige and power in the era of nation-states. But in the nineteenth century reaction to the French Revolution resulted in a grassroots drive (mostly led by the laity) to give the Pope centralist, all-absorbing powers, with the argument that only a divinely instituted, infallible papacy could stabilise society. This ultramontane victory led to the *de facto* abolition of collegiality for the next seventy years. But the moderate minority—those who 'saw the papacy as the centre where everything came together rather than, as did the ultramontanes, the centre from which everything flowed' (p. 72)—won out again at Vatican II, reclaiming the notion of collegiality alongside primacy, but leaving unresolved the means of putting it into effect.

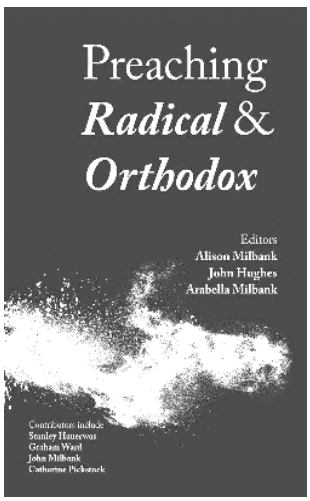
By far the longest part of the essay is the second, which is about the nuts and bolts of each council: who took part, who controlled it and how it was run. The contrasts are a reminder that there really is no fixed template: Trent involved at most a third of the world's bishops, Vatican I about two-thirds and Vatican II around 90 per cent. While Trent opened without a single preparatory document, Vatican I was carefully prepared by the Roman curia, while at Vatican II the curia's documents were rejected by bishops and rewritten with the help of theologians. Theologians—a new breed, the product of the Church's medieval universities—played a similar role in Trent as at Vatican II, teaching bishops and assisting with the writing of decrees, but at Vatican I they were papal appointees who took orders from the curia. Heads of state and their envoys were very involved in Trent and Vatican I but not at Vatican II, where lay auditors were heads of Catholic organizations.

Part three, which considers the impact of the councils, is packed with insights and acute observations. With a historian's long lens and a teacher's gift for synthesis, O'Malley suggests that Trent's restoration of the primacy of grace gave the post-Reformation Church its missionary dynamism, but the council also unwittingly fuelled the political and religious polarisation of a divided Europe. Similarly, Vatican I's negative reaction to modernity meant that Catholicism 'took on the guise of its reverse-image ideology' (p.185), while turning the Pope into a Catholic celebrity in the following decades. O'Malley sees Vatican II's main effects in recognising that the Church was in a mutual relationship with modernity, putting social issues at the centre of its ethical thinking and becoming a force of reconciliation among religious traditions. Such a '180-degree turn' (p.189) is surely proof of the power of councils to transform the Church's self-understanding.

As long as the world changes and the Church has to deal with that change, ecumenical councils will remain its main instrument for doing so, thinks O'Malley. The next one could be in the Global South, to reflect its growing significance. The logistics are formidable—there are over 5,000 bishops now compared with 2,600 with a right to attend Vatican II—but so are advances in communications technology. But one thing is for certain: bishops will continue to meet, and surprises will continue to happen.

Austen Ivereigh

***Preaching Radical and Orthodox*, edited by Alison Milbank, John Hughes and Arabella Milbank (London: SCM, 2017). 978 0 3340 5641 6, pp.236, £19.99.**



Sermons are rarely published these days. That is for the simple reason that few people want to read them. To be sure many preachers find—or at least solicit—a wider audience on the internet, but sermons in print are now an endangered species. So why, we wonder, should the SCM Press have supposed that there is a market for this collection of forty homilies? The reason lies in what they have in common. All our contributors here taking their turn in the pulpit, subscribe to 'Radical Orthodoxy' or at least are in broad sympathy with its claims. And for those who watch the shifting tides of theological opinion, Radical Orthodoxy is of commanding interest.

Radical Orthodoxy is a modern theological movement—modern, but fiercely critical of modernity. Proponents of Radical Orthodoxy argue that an orthodox interpretation of Christian faith, as given primarily in the ecumenical creeds, is more intellectually sustainable than contemporary liberal reinterpretations of Christianity born of misconceived attempts to make Christian belief more plausible and palatable. Notable names associated with Radical Orthodoxy include John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward, all of whom contribute to this book. Principal tenets of Radical Orthodoxy include a denial of a sharp distinction between faith and reason, or between reason and revelation, and the insistence that human knowledge is only knowledge in so far as it is illuminated by divine truth. Such claims amount to a re-enthronement of theology as 'the Queen of the Sciences'.

Many have found the published writings of scholars of a radically orthodox persuasion forbiddingly demanding. So we turn to this collection of sermons hoping that they will be rather less taxing. After all, a sermon, unlike a learned article in an academic journal, has at least to be perspicuous. Thankfully, one can report that the homilies collected here are in a language we can all understand—though whether we can meet their challenge to our discipleship is another matter. Indeed these sermons are, with few exceptions, models of preaching at its best, weighty without being heavy, bold and imaginative in use of language, firmly anchored in the here and now but reaching to the eternal, touching the heart and awakening the conscience.

Those who presume to preach would do well to study closely the powerful introduction to this book, an essay that rebukes all of us who have ever ascended a pulpit ill prepared. Preaching, we are told, 'is a sacramental act that makes something happen'. It must be prophetic, for every sermon is 'a moment of crisis and decision' (p.3). Preaching 'must awaken a desire for Paradise' (p.7). One salutary admonition is a reprimand to all of us who have occasionally overstepped the mark in our desire to engage and retain the attention of a congregation. Everything said from the pulpit, we are warned, 'should accord with our sacred calling as proclaimers of the word and have a *decorum*, to use the rhetorical term, a fittingness for that proclamation and for those to whom it is to be proclaimed' (p.3). (It is our unreflecting asides, alas, that let us down. One of our contributors says that to speak of the Mass as 'the Lord's Supper' makes it sound like 'a special at the local Harvester' [p.142].)

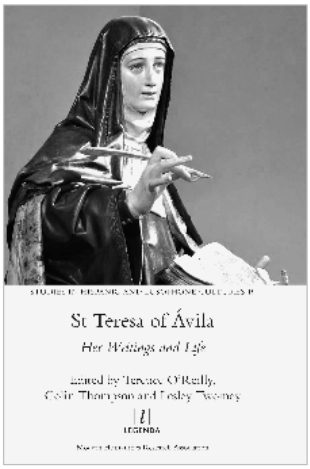
Radical Orthodoxy attaches great importance to the sweep and rhythm of the Church's year and to fidelity to the lectionary. So the sermons brought together here are arranged by sequence of seasons. Each seasonal section is introduced by a theological essay on the season in which the sermons find their proper place. These searching reflections will prove as rewarding to the reader as the homilies they preface.

There is little evidence of editorial redaction of the text of these sermons. What we read, it seems, is exactly what was heard. Thus occasional infelicities and tantalising local references survive—and perhaps it is good that they do. Professor Michael Northcott invites me, as I read his sermon in my study, to take note of the risen Lord 'looking down on us from the nave roof' (p.174). So I too look up—which is what a sermon is meant to make me do.

Preaching Radical and Orthodox is dedicated to the memory of one of its editors, the Revd Dr John Hughes, Dean and Chaplain of Jesus College, Cambridge, who died in a car accident on 29 June 2014, aged 35.

John Pridmore

***St Teresa of Ávila: Her Writings and Life*, edited by Terence O'Reilly, Colin Thompson and Lesley Twomey (Oxford: Legenda, 2018). 978 1 7818 8501 7, pp.274, £75.00.**



This collection of essays has its origins in a conference held in Oxford in 2013, marking the five-hundredth anniversary, in 2015, of St Teresa's birth. The material is arranged under three headings: Teresa and Her Times, Teresa the Mystic and Teresa the Writer. The topics are wide-ranging, covering history, art history (Jeremy Roe writes about Carducho, the theorist and painter), literature, theology, spirituality and stylistics. (Linguists and students of literature alike should not miss Christopher Pountain's contribution.)

Those well up in Teresian studies will know about this book already; a number of leading scholars have contributed to it. Others less specialised can find an index of individual authors and chapter

titles at www.mhra.org.uk/publications/shlc-19. It is to more generally interested readers of *The Way* that I address what follows. It is, I think, worth a trip to one's nearest academic library for the sake of two contributions in particular. Once you have the volume in your hands, you can decide whether to stray further.

The first chapter I want to single out is Rowan Williams's 'Teresa as a Reader of the Gospels'. The saint's patterns of scriptural reference, he explains, were what one would expect from someone with no access to a vernacular Bible. But what is fascinating is his next step, of observing which texts she uses most, and why. Dr Williams's study draws out Teresa's distinctive theology and ecclesiology of the contemplative calling: one tactfully elaborated by an 'unlearned' woman not allowed to preach or teach, writing also in an age grown fearful of antinomian direct lines to God. The Jesus of the Gospels is invoked to point the way.

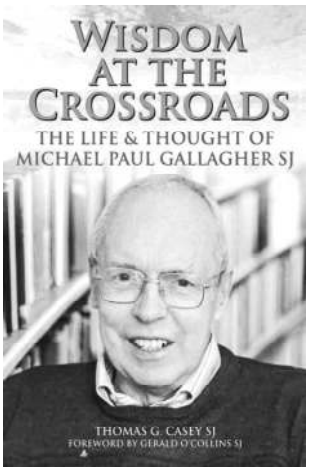
Second, Terence O'Reilly's 'Saint Teresa and Her First Jesuit Confessors' explores the importance for Teresa of P. Diego de Cetina's and P. Juan de Prádanos' formation in the Society. Cetina, in particular, had been given the Exercises by Miguel de Torres, who had been given them in Rome by his close friend, St Ignatius himself. Since the mid-1530s, when she became a nun in Ávila, Teresa had tried to practise mental prayer according to the prescriptions of Francisco de Osuna's *Tercer abecedario*. But her difficulties only mounted, and by the mid-1550s they had reached crisis point. It was then that Cetina, and next, in 1556, Prádanos became her confessors. The 'early' Ignatian spirituality of these sensitive young priests allowed them to understand her predicament, restore her confidence, and help her to move forward—not a moment too soon, either. As O'Reilly points out (pp. 120–121), after Ignatius' death in 1556, the contemplative aspect of the Exercises was gradually being overshadowed. By the time a third Jesuit, P. Baltasar Álvarez, succeeded Prádanos as Teresa's confessor in 1558, the founder's followers were treading a more ascetic path.

I also recommend Colin Thompson's lucid and insightful introduction, not least for its presentation of the early biographical tradition. Even so, Thompson writes,

> The Teresa we encounter in her books is less the miracle-worker of the hagiographers than a very human, sometimes flawed figure who, despite all the barriers placed in her way, reached a level of wisdom in the things of the spirit attained by very few others. (p. 7)

Eric Southworth

Thomas G. Casey, *Wisdom at the Crossroads: The Life and Thought of Michael Paul Gallagher SJ* (Dublin: Messenger, 2018). 978 1 910248 89 8, pp.144, £10.95.



Few professional theologians make convincing spiritual guides. Many of us get caught up in footnote minutiae, steely arguments or abstract musings, far removed from the real struggles of those who seek depth and interiority in the midst of our postmodern culture.

Not so the late Michael Paul Gallagher. The last book review I wrote for *The Way* dealt with his posthumous *Into Extra Time* (2016), a deeply realistic account of what went on in his body and soul as he lay dying of cancer. Those arresting pages provide the terminally ill and those near to them with spiritual consolation and intellectual tenderness springing from the grim questions that then racked the Irish Jesuit's mind. This was no deathbed conversion from academia to real life, however. Gallagher's ultimate book soared naturally from how he had lived, written and changed over time, through prayer and encounters with flesh-and-blood people, rich and poor, learned and uneducated, believing or unbelieving, in Europe, in Asia and in Latin America.

Michael Paul wrote more than a dozen books in his lifetime, most of which were bestsellers but are now, sadly, often out of print. It is therefore a great gift to receive Thomas Casey's recent book on his life and thought. Although Casey is an academic, *Wisdom at the Crossroads* does exactly what its title states: it shares Gallagher's deep wisdom about God and humanity at the intersection between spirituality, faith and culture. The book calls itself 'middlebrow, not academic' (p.14). It skilfully weaves together (auto)biographical elements, wisdom drawn from scripture, philosophy and theology, and a deep sense of spirituality. This quality of content, joined with its clarity, should make it especially attractive to readers of *The Way*.

The book opens on the theme of crossroads—one dear to Michael Paul and to the historical era in which he developed his unique approach to belief and unbelief, to faith and culture. Chapter 1 examines the spiritual and intellectual stages of Gallagher's life, as a youth and as a Jesuit, rising to meet the challenges of the day, whether set forth by Popes Paul VI and John Paul II or evident in the faces and lives of those he met. Springing from an anecdote about Gallagher fiddling with a wireless to find a clear

signal, chapters 2–7 pick up different 'wavelengths' to which he hearkened. These themes are unbelief, culture, poetic and literary perspectives, the sense of wonder, imagination and freedom.

It is quite remarkable that Casey can channel all of these different 'wavelengths' into personally compelling spiritual advice. Some of this comes directly from Gallagher's writings: a beautiful letter to St Ignatius from 31 July 2015 (pp. 31–33), for instance, or the moving discovery in illness of the giftedness of weakness (p. 124). More insights come through the great poets and novelists whom Gallagher read and shared with passion, quoted and commented upon by Casey: see George Herbert's 'Love III' (pp. 34–35). Still more spiritual advice comes by means of personal anecdotes that Casey picked up as a Jesuit scholastic, while living with Gallagher as his local superior. Finally. Jesuit and Ignatian theologians such as William Lynch and Hans Urs von Balthasar come alive with new meaning when they reflect on, say, the imagination and beauty (pp. 127, 128, 132).

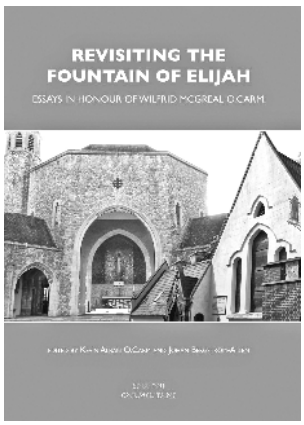
Most of the spiritual advice that *Wisdom at the Crossroads* offers is cut from classic Ignatian cloth: the distinction between consolation and desolation; inner and cultural dialogue with God; a renewed sense of wonder that sparks the imagination and favours freedom by renouncing disordered attachments. But this classic advice does not come across as familiar banalities. The warp of Gallagher's biography joins with the weft of Casey's hand-picked themes to create a cloth that readers can cut and tailor for themselves in a highly personal way. Especially helpful are the descriptions of Gallagher's great gift for spiritual conversation (pp. 106–111, 114)—likewise, the genius of his intriguing onomatopoeic progression, 'Ha! Aha! Ah' (pp. 103–105), offered in the lecture hall and in spiritual direction.

Casey has painted a portrait of a singularly gifted man, priest and Jesuit. But this portrait is not intimidating. It is an invitation for readers to exercise their own gifts and talents in the midst of cultural challenges. It beckons them peacefully to fight the interior spiritual struggles to which God tenderly calls them. This book prepares its readers for spiritual progress by ensuring that they are possessed of the 'readiness' that Hamlet—and Gallagher—commended. It also wisely reminds us that 'ripeness is all' (*King Lear*, V. ii. 11). The example of Gallagher's life teaches the reader that spirituality is real only when it is taught through word and deed, over decades and in many cultural settings.

Casey is to be commended for introducing Michael Paul to the many. It is my hope that *Wisdom at the Crossroads* will ultimately lead its readers to pick up his own writings on how God freely invites us to partake in God's wonderful life.

Nicolas Steeves SJ

***Revisiting the Fountain of Elijah: Essays in Honour of Wilfrid McGreal O.Carm.*, edited by Kevin Alban and John Bergström-Allen (Rome: Edizioni Carmelitane, 2018). 978 8 8728 8177 4, pp.184, £15.00.**



The essays in this book were written to be presented as a *Festschrift* to the late Fr Wilfrid McGreal, well known as a Carmelite university chaplain, broadcaster, writer, preacher and Prior Provincial. Fortunately he was able to appreciate receiving this honour before his death at the end of 2019. Wilfrid had himself written a book on Carmelite spirituality, *At the Fountain of Elijah* (1999), hence the title of this collection. As in any such work, a wide variety of subjects is touched upon, all with a Carmelite theme. Some will be of interest to a few people whose work might be education or church history; others will find a wider readership in that they focus on themes of more general interest.

So often people think of Carmelites only as Teresian (Discalced) nuns, who form by far the largest group in the Order; but this book reminds us that there are many ways to be Carmelite, not only as a contemplative enclosed nun, but as a friar—whose ministry can take many forms. Carmel also includes communities of apostolic sisters and brothers, hermits, lay Carmelites, and numerous other men and women who are nourished by the order's spirituality.

There is something in this book for everyone who is fascinated by Carmel and what the order signifies in its way of life and its many saints. As might be expected in these days there is an emphasis on Elijah, the great archetype of the Carmelites: on the call to give a prophetic witness to the world, not just through prayer but through a commitment to challenging the status quo in works of justice and peace. This is elaborated in an essay by the present General, Miceal O'Neill O.Carm. Archbishop Rowan Williams (a great admirer of the Carmelite writer Ruth Burrows) writes on 'Theology, Prayer and Prophecy'. His masterly contribution grounds the Carmelite vocation in a way of living that witnesses to the vocation of all Christians. He writes:

> The sister or brother of Carmel is living out the baptismal journey out of slavery in a way that is visible and audible to the rest of God's people, so as to remind them of the shape of their own calling, but it is distinctive in its conscious looking at the legacy of Elijah and the Hebrew prophets. And Teresa brilliantly links her own particular vision of Carmel with another kind of prophetic witness, that of Jesus' women followers. It is a profoundly Scriptural picture. (p.55)

It is the spirit and power of Elijah that continue to inspire Carmelites of every persuasion, with an inspiration arising from the very beginnings of the

order on Mount Carmel, where a group of hermits settled in the twelfth century. It has influenced the order's development and its Reform movements down to the present, linked with devotion to Mary as sister and mother, the 'lady of the place', which is the land of Carmel, and where no founder's name has come down to us from those very early days. The centrality of prophecy and prayer has deep roots. Carmel is meant to witness to contemplation at its heart, but it is also lived out in the welcoming of the poor, the marginalised, the world's 'little ones', which a pilgrimage centre such as Aylesford, and Wilfrid's own life and ministry, made visible. All the mendicant orders, Carmelite, Franciscan and Dominican, flourish in many ways that can take onlookers by surprise, because we tend to associate an order with only one of its varied outward expressions.

The former Prior General Fernando Millan Romeral O.Carm. introduces readers to a lesser-known Carmelite, Blessed Titus Brandsma, who died in Dachau concentration camp, as a priest, writer and academic who refused to compromise with the Nazi regime. He presents Titus, as did Wilfrid in a letter he wrote for the millennium, as a pioneer of ecumenism, not just an opponent of anti-Semitism. In these days of increasing ecumenism, Titus stands as an example of one who not only loved his order and, with many others, revered its origins in Elijah, Mary and the Hebrew scriptures, but who did so in such a way that he longed to share its spirituality with a much wider audience. Now in mission countries the Constitutions of the friars encourage not just ecumenism but interreligious dialogue as well. In his day Wilfrid was someone who encouraged the formation of ecumenical Carmelite spirituality groups (as described here by Sylvia Lucas), rather than welcoming only those who desired formally to join the Third Order as practising Catholics. He was always very proud of his induction as an honorary canon of the Anglican cathedral of Rochester.

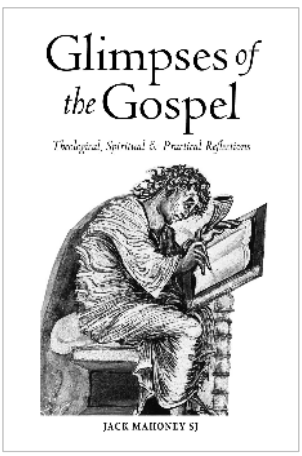
Peter Tyler looks at Wilfrid's book on guilt and healing as a model of his thought on this subject. He was known for his compassion, his care for those on the margins. Above all, I—who knew him personally—would attest to his great kindness. He was kind in a world where this virtue is sometimes equated with weakness, whereas in fact it shows a mark of respect that everyone can understand, believer and non-believer alike.

The book also contains a very interesting essay by Rowan Clare Williams, one-time colleague of the Carmelite chaplain at York University, which looks at the iconography of St Clare and how the attitude to women in the Church has been moulded by depictions of its contemplative nuns. There is a piece by Roderick Strange on 'Being a University Chaplain', and one by Gemma Simmonds on 'Hearing the Call: A Theology of Vocation'. None of this exhausts the subjects touched on is this volume, in which anyone interested in

Carmelite spirituality in its many forms can find spiritual nourishment as well as intellectual stimulation. It is a book worthy of the man it was written to honour, who has left the order in England a legacy of which it can be proud.

Elizabeth Ruth Obbard O.Carm.

Jack Mahoney, *Glimpses of the Gospels: Theological, Spiritual and Practical Reflections* (Dublin: Messenger, 2019). 978 1 7881 2023 4, pp. 144, £11.95.



An eminent moral theologian has used his leisure in retirement to examine passages in the Gospels which challenge the general reader. The articles are succinct because they were first written for the British Jesuit online journal *Thinking Faith*. They concentrate our attention on sayings of Jesus or events in his life which, the author says, 'have captivated my interest … and my curiosity' (p. 9).

In the first chapter, 'Getting the Point', he examines the context of Jesus' replies to his interlocutors on giving to Caesar and grounds for divorce in Matthew; what is meant by daily bread in the Lord's Prayer; what the point is in various parables; and what we mean by God being with us. As a moralist he examines the Sermon on the Mount and the approach of Jesus to the commandments. He uses his questioning imagination to investigate gaps in the Gospels, which devotional writers down the centuries have tried to fill. In the last part of the book he takes Luke's Gospel as a guide for Lent and Easter, nudging us along with his theological curiosity and exploring the human thinking of Jesus: how far was the prayer of Jesus in the wilderness a form of strategic planning for his future ministry? Did the Transfiguration take place at night, he asks. How far did the encounter with Moses and Elijah confirm Jesus' conclusions about his future?

Mahoney's reflections on the Sunday gospels of Lent and Easter in the last part of the book are a good guide for our own journey. He does not back away from the puzzles that occur to many of us. His delving into the traditional non-biblical scene of the risen Christ appearing to his mother, significant for Ignatius Loyola in the Spiritual Exercises, shows his dogged approach through meditation, questioning and research. 'I started on a quest to find the origin of a fourteenth-century stained-glass widow in Fairford church, first visited as a Jesuit student.' (p. 147)

Anthony Nye SJ