



# Priestly People

SERVANTS OF THE PARACLETE

March 2019 - Vol. 35 No. 3

## Lenten Reflection 2019

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. He 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, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him making peace by the blood of the cross [through him] whether those on earth or those in heaven (Col.1:15-20).*

The epistle to the Colossians is a wonderful description of the role that Jesus, the Logos, plays in the ongoing drama of our evolution to our end point.

***“He has risen as he said, Alleluia, Alleluia.” Resurrection: Feast of fire, heat and light.***

The Inauguration of a new Creation!

Approximately Thirteen and a half billion years ago, there blazed forth a wave of energy that defies human imagination. That blazing forth resulted in the globe of earth we call our home. Within that enormous blazing forth of energy there was present every conceivable atom, molecule and cell that would at some time in the future come into existence. You and I were present at the Big Bang, secretly, quietly resting and awaiting our time to come forth into our unique existence. It took thirteen billion plus years of adjustments, experiments and re-adjustments to get to where you and I could enjoy our home with all our fellow creatures. And just imagine, out of all that mass of energy, the adjustments, the fine-tuning, the explosions and implosions of energy, there came out of all that??? YOU! AND ME! And deep within our being, there was nested another power, another cosmic force that contained the possibility of breaking the boundaries of our body-self and setting fire to the earth, even the entire cosmos. It is the eternal light of the Divine Creator from

which we and every creature came forth. As we struggled forth from the clay of the earth, our creator accompanied us and gave us a share in the eternal life, wisdom and goodness of the Holy Mystery we call God.

In our biblical story, beginning with Genesis, we learn that humans are created in “the Divine Image.” We enjoy a radical intimacy with the divinity, an intimacy that includes a share in the divine power of creation. At every mass as the priest prepares the bread and wine for the offering, he mixes a drop or two of water to the wine that is to become the blood of Christ. He says as he pours: “By this comingling of water and wine as one, may we come to *share in the divinity of Christ as he humbled himself to share in our humanity*. This is the end point to which all creation struggles, and we are the sacraments bringing to fullness this divine plan. From the earliest days of our contemplative and mystical tradition, there has been the belief that just as Christ became one like us, so too, we are to become one like him, just as he is with the Father. We are designed and destined to be sacraments of divine

love. Love is the essence of the Divinity in whose image we are created. And love is the end point, the ultimate “Holy Communion” to which all creation is directed. And we are the agents by which this process is being completed.

As the story unfolds through time, and as human creation grows and evolves towards the fullness of our humanity, our share in the divine life also grows within us, eventually bringing us to a point where God, through Jesus, invests us with greater and greater powers to share in the fulfillment of creation and to be partners in bringing human creation into an alignment with the Will of God.

The story that contains and reveals the origin, the purpose and destiny of creation proposes that the awesome, holy and mysterious source of all that we call our world, our universe, the awesome, holy mystery that we call God, invested us with a share in the mystery, a share in the life of the All Holy One, the One Jesus called Father, *Abba*.

We are born into a world that invests much time, money and resources to make us believe that our safety and security, our happiness depends on buying into the lie that all authority, power, wisdom and knowledge remains outside of us. We are drawn into a slavery that seeks to maintain us in an infantile dependency of our political, socio-economic, academic institutions. All too often our religious institutions collude in maintaining this lie. Through the years of our growth from infancy to childhood, to youth, adolescence and finally adulthood and elder hood, we are constantly reminded of our dependency, our helplessness in the face of our human weakness, our “sinfulness.” We are taught to believe that all authority, all wisdom, is outside of us, invested in institutions, authorities, experts and what have you. This leads to the deadly assumption that the condition of our world, our human family is someone else’s fault and responsibility to fix. We find scapegoats to heap the blame on and exonerate ourselves from any culpability or responsibility for fixing it. In fact, our Christian story is one of responsible freedom, creative engagement in our world and the building of the Kingdom here and now: “Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Humans are created from the depths of the creator God, endowed with divine energies and capabilities to be co-creators of our world and the universe. The world we live in today, with all the violence, the suffering, poverty, disease, hunger, the lack of sufficient health care and education for millions of people on our earth, is a mirror image of our spiritual and psychological maturity. In our world of advanced

technology we remain locked into a pre-adolescent, self-centered world view. We are still evolving with much promise yet to be uncovered. Isaiah gave a description of true religion:

***This, rather, is the fasting I wish: Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless, Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn and your wound shall quickly be healed; your vindication shall go before you, and the Glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say Here I am! (Is 58:6-9).***

Think of this in the context of today’s world and our religious practices and assumptions: Jews fighting Muslims, Christians fighting and killing Muslims, Muslims killing Christians; all while we piously pray to the same God of us all. What’s wrong with this picture?

Throughout the centuries since Christ taught and healed, there has crept into our belief system the notion that humanity is essentially flawed, soiled beyond repair. According to this model humanity is in need of outside intervention to aid us to overcome this fatal flaw. We need to be saved from ourselves in order to escape the destruction of sin and the risk of eternal damnation. The message of liberation of Jesus has been twisted and distorted into a message of being bound and gagged by “ought’s” and “should’s,” “do’s” and “don’ts,” prohibitions and threats, such that we wind up immobilized and spiritually drugged with fear and trepidation about going to hell if we make one false step. We become so preoccupied with our personal salvation, so obsessed with the externals of religion, that we forget the primary command: Love your neighbor as yourself. We are so busy getting to heaven that we forget our earth home.

Christ on the other hand preached insistently, and worked signs and wonders to remind us of our inherent sacred character, our participation in the life of God, and our natural leaning towards love and compassion. Christ came to restore, not destroy, to free us, not to imprison us in a jungle of fear based behaviors and beliefs. Christ looked through the entanglements of sin and distortion to the eternal truth of our sacred character, the living Image of the Divine Creator. He saw and revered our inmost sacred character and called us to life in its fullness, courageously, fearlessly and heroically.

The Feast of the Presentation of Jesus offers us the opportunity to examine more closely the organic energy flow throughout the story of our redemption and to grasp more fully the connecting fibers that link all phases with all the separate key events. Our biblical story is one holistic process, all parts and epochs blending into one enormous flash of divine fire upon the earth and throughout the cosmos. Our biblical story is one that weaves an unbroken chain, a seamless web from the beginning of creation to the ultimate fulfillment of creation in Jesus, the Logos. Tragically over the centuries and millennia, we have learned to treat our sacred story as literal, concrete historical fact rather than a story with transcendent meaning and relevance for each individual person across time and cultures. To relegate this story to literal historical fact is to render it inoperative as a transcendent message from the divine to us as we struggle to make sense and meaning of our life. The end result of this tactic is that we remain separate from, and outside the margins of the field of activity, passive spectators in the unfolding of creation, the Divine plan and its ultimate completion in Jesus. We find ourselves relegated to the role of passive spectators of events that originate with God, Jesus and the first disciples and apostles of Jesus and remain locked in the sands of past history with no meaning or relevance beyond the people and times in which they were written. So many of our great mysteries of salvation history remain in the realm of nice stories that please and titillate, but do nothing to inspire us to recognize our unspoken hopes and wishes for heroic meaning and radical challenges to our courage. Since we are merely spectators, recipients of the blessings of salvation, we go through life expecting that somehow Jesus is going to fix everything and make all the suffering and pain, the darkness and sin go away and we can look forward to an eternity of bliss, finally removed from the soil and toil of the world we left behind. Everything depends on Jesus and our role is to pray and remind Jesus of his promises and implore him fix our world as if he were a divine fix-it man coming to rescue us from our own negligence. This plays right into the hands of those political, socio-economic and religious institutions that nourish themselves and perpetuate their power by keeping the masses subject and dependent on their authority. Jesus on the other hand is a savior who liberates, empowers and then challenges us to responsible mature freedom, and active engagement in the struggles of our human family. Our Story of God's intervention in the course of history consists of two great feasts: The Nativity and the Resurrection surrounded by satellites of more or less

smaller feasts that complement and reinforce the meaning of the major feasts. The Nativity and Resurrection are not intrusions into the course of history, but inevitable and logical evolutionary moments that arise naturally out of the course of evolution and the passage of history. They were meant to be from the very beginning and all creation was moving toward the two great moments. They are threshold moments through which our evolutionary and developmental process passes through to a new human consciousness, a new summons to enter the story and drive it forward. In these great mysteries God and human creation enter into a new pact of mutual cooperation in moving towards the end point of history.

The feast of the Presentation plays a remarkably significant and key role in the chain of events that make up our salvation history and completes our story. The feast occurs approximately forty days after the celebration of Christmas. And occurs at a time in which Ash Wednesday and Lent are rising on the horizon. It gathers together the events leading up to Christmas, but also points ahead to the ongoing development of Jesus' life and teachings finally arriving at Good Friday and Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost. Simeon's prayer casts a shadow over the otherwise routine celebration of Jesus' Presentation as was the custom for all first born male children. It marks him out as a savior who will fulfill the promises made to his people. In this story we are reading our own spiritual biography that is being written between the lines of the narrative. Subsequent events single us out as the ones who will carry the message and mission of Jesus beyond his own lifetime to the far ends of the world. You and I are key players in the working out of the details and bringing them to completion. In us, the community of the Faithful and each of us individually, the Risen Lord finds an entry way into time to continue his mission of bringing love and compassion to our world, healing of the human family emerging from a transformed heart.

Jesus, we believe, is the divine Logos, the Word that reveals the inner life of the Father and the plan and design of our cosmos. Jesus is the one from whom it emerged, blossomed and unfolded into the creation we call our world today. Implied in our belief system is the ongoing role that the Logos, the Word, plays in the ongoing evolution of the creative process that flamed forth thirteen and a half billion years ago and continues unfolding and revealing itself in each one of us as we make our way through our life.

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