

Earth Day, 2020

“One microscopic organism will infect millions and kill hundreds of thousands of God’s children and sink the world into a recession” (from Catholic Climate Covenant, 04/07/2020). Though this appears to be a very negative way to reflect on creation on this Earth Day, my “insight into the obvious”, as Sr. Rita Norris used to say, is that we are intimately connected with everything, even the smallest of beings. With conviction that our connection is rooted in God the Creator, some references to *Laudato Si’* will exemplify our connectedness and the integrity of all Creation. (All quotes from *Laudato Si’* are from #80.)

“Creating a world in need of development, God in some way sought to limit himself in such a way that many of the things we think of as evils, dangers or sources of suffering, are in reality part of the pains of childbirth which he uses to draw us into cooperation with the Creator.” What dignity God has given us in desiring our cooperation in the development of Creation! A responsibility? Yes, of course, but an opportunity for us to exercise that wonderful gift of free will which God has given us, we who are made “in God’s image and likeness.” When I was teaching, a question often asked by middle and junior high students was “Why doesn’t God just make us do the right thing? It would be so much easier.” And my reply was always, “God will not take away our free will; without it we could not LOVE.” Cooperating in the development of Creation is acting in love.

“God is intimately present to each being without impinging on the autonomy of his creature, and this gives rise to the rightful authority of earthly affairs....His divine presence, which ensures the subsistence and growth of each being, ‘continues the work of creation.’ “ God is present; everything is sacred and has integrity.

“The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore, from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge: ‘Nature is nothing other than a certain kind of art, namely God’s art, as if a shipbuilder were able to give timbers the wherewithal to move themselves to take the form of a ship.’ “

God has dignified nonhumans as well as we humans. Nature knows what it is, so to speak.

“The Holy Spirit can be said to possess infinite creativity, proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, including the most complex and inscrutable.” The Spirit of Love overcomes all our bungling efforts and brings something good into being.

Before the Coronavirus we were aware of the injustice with which we were using our Earth, our home; but this crisis has forced us to acknowledge with boldness the devastation that human ingenuity in the overuse of natural resources and its focus on consumerism has caused. Overuse, increasing profit by taking more than we need and selling goods that may be convenient but wasteful, can make us blindly overconfident in our ability to control creation rather than work in harmonious cooperation. We have seen that the poor, those whose lives have not been enriched with our production of goods and the growth of technology, are the ones who have suffered the most. How do we work to respect their inherent dignity?

We have just celebrated Easter—in fact, we are celebrating Easter for 50 days.

Hear the words to the Colossians/to us 1:15-20

“Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Christ all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or rulers, authorities or powers. All things have been created through and for Christ, who indeed is before all things and in whom all things hold together. Christ is the head of the body, the church, the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so as to become in all things first. For God was pleased to make all fullness dwell in Christ, to reconcile completely all things to God, making peace through the blood of the cross, all things, whether on earth or in heaven.”

Christ, whose Spirit we have been given, shows us by his life, death, and resurrection how to live as children of God, how to live as the Body of Christ. In the January-March edition of the *Catholic Worker*, Louise Zwick reviews a recent book that encourages us to renew the theology of the Mystical Body. The author spells out three bodies of Christ: his historical body born of Mary, overshadowed by the Spirit, and spiritualized into a glorious body; his sacramental body; his ecclesial body. Mrs. Zwick says, “One can see in the unity of the Mystical Body, in the Scriptures featured in the celebration of the liturgy, that secular economic or political theories and practices that hurt the masses of workers, and the poor and immigrants and refugees, are not inspired by the Holy Spirit. One can identify in the liturgy with the self-giving of the Lord and the Paschal Mystery, and try to imitate that in our lives.”

Finally, in expressing integrity of Creation, we read the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.

God’s Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings.

Possibilities for reflection or discussion

1. Have you seen or heard any news items that indicate that we are realizing the need for changes in our thinking and in the way we are living?
2. What new habit or habits can we form that will keep us focused on our connectedness?
3. When we were younger, the theology of the Mystical Body of Christ was more prominent in our thinking. Would we benefit from reviving that?
4. Reread #80 in *Laudato Si'*. Choose one sentence that amazes you.