

## Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 1st May Cosmic Connection of the Heart

*Our understanding of the Holy Spirit is mostly too limited and too undeveloped. It is time now to acknowledge and release her surging power throughout all life. We need to begin delighting in, and celebrating the dynamic Spirit pulsing through the Church, through humanity, through the evolving universe and through every corner of our own hearts*

We were on our way back home after Benediction one bright night, many decades ago, my mother and myself, when she reached for my hand and suddenly stopped walking. 'Look up,' she said, 'Look up and listen.' I still remember it as a mystical moment. Something inside us stands in amazement under the sky at night. There is a curious bond, a sacramental intimacy, between the universe of our heart and the heart of our universe, as they spin around each other in a web of wonder.

At the Opening of the Paralympic Games in London last year, Stephen Hawking said, 'Look up at the stars, not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see, and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious.'

There was a hidden hint of theology and cosmology in my mother's remark that winter's evening. We sense the cosmic connections by heart. Pentecost is taking place whenever invisible mystery is becoming visible, whenever the unknown becomes accessible, when incarnate divinity lights up our soul. It is taking place wherever life moves on towards its final goal, wherever the evolving universe is unfolding towards its ultimate realisation, because it is the Holy Spirit that is facilitating and enabling that compelling attraction.

Theologian Karl Rahner deplores the poverty of our theology of the Spirit, deeply misunderstanding its universal significance and primal potency. He reminds us that the Holy Spirit is revealed as the divine power in the deepest heart of each person and of this earthly world. This power is the graced centre of creation, divinely imbued with the evolving potential to reach its completion when God is 'all in all'.

'And here the earth,' he writes, 'behind her continual development in space and time, sinks her root into the power of the all-mighty God . . . his Spirit has already begun to transform the world into himself . . . the new creation has already started, the new power of a transfigured earth is already being formed from the world's innermost heart . . .'

Priest and scientist Teilhard de Chardin had a unique insight into the interweaving of the evolving planet and the work of the Holy Spirit. His Pentecost moment came when he was inspired to recognise that all becoming and developing in an expanding universe is animated by the divine drive of the Holy Spirit. 'For Teilhard,' wrote Professor Ursula King, 'the heart of God is found at the heart of the world, and the living, natural world is shot through with the presence of the divine, with what he eventually was to call "the divine milieu".'

By this he meant that our universe is a christified one, infused by the divine presence in all that happens. The cosmic Christ is the centre of the universe, of humanity, of each person, and 'at the heart of the tiniest atom'. For him faith consecrates the world. It sees the 'divine fire' hidden in the body of the world. 'Oh the beauty of Spirit,' he exclaimed, 'as it rises up adorned with all the riches of the earth'. His faith was incarnational,

sacramental and Christ-centred.

Our mystics, physicists and theologians are combining to provide images of a vibrant, utterly free and unpredictable Holy Spirit that transcends our current and misleadingly limited understanding of its dynamic presence. St Augustine saw the totality of creation as a huge sponge immersed in a boundless sea, each tiny particle of it saturated with the ocean of the Spirit. 'I set before the sight of my soul', he wrote, 'the whole creation (stars, earth, air and mortal creatures); yea, and whatever we do not see . . . And thee, O Lord, I imagined on every part environing and pervading it, though in every way infinite . . .'

'Groaning with the world', writes Professor Elizabeth Johnson, 'delighting in its advance, keeping faith with its failures, energising it graciously from within, the Creator Spirit is with all creatures in their finitude and death, holding them in redemptive love and drawing them into an unforeseeable future in the divine communion.'

Diarmuid O'Murchu's *In the Beginning was the Spirit* liberates the Holy Spirit from our deadly doctrinal descriptions: 'Spirit', he writes, 'is the wellspring of all possibility, the restless pulsation of every movement of creation and of every desire in the human heart. It is the power of becoming that awakens every stir of imagination, wisdom and creativity . . .'

We strive for something more because deep in our hearts the Spirit lures us to do so. The restlessness within is a divine one, the fruit of the enlivening, energising and empowering Spirit, the same Spirit that blows where it wills and that never ceases to amaze and surprise us. '(It) belongs primarily' he writes, 'to the world itself, and not to any church or religion. And it is present with a cosmic passion and a personal intimacy.'

One could say that the Pentecost Spirit lives in the core of the natural universe, firing and energising its inevitable evolution, tenderly holding all creatures in their finitude and death, and urging and drawing the world forward toward an unfathomable future. In his *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), John Paul II explains that 'the presence and activity of the Spirit are universal, limited neither by space or time . . . affecting society and history, peoples, cultures and religions.'

Maybe my mother's silent wonder on that winter's evening in 1947 arose from a sense of being held by a Spirit of connecting, belonging and intimacy. 'At such moments', writes O'Murchu, 'we know instinctively and intuitively that all is one, that relationship defines the very core of life itself'. And then we kneel with Pierre Teilhard in utterly personal and universal adoration.

'I love you', he prayed, 'for the extensions to your body and soul in the farthest corners of creation through grace, through life, through matter. Lord Jesus, you who are as gentle as the human heart, as fiery as the forces of nature, as intimate as life itself, you in whom I can melt away and with whom I must have mastery and freedom: I love you as the world, as this world which has captivated my heart; and it is you, I now realise, that people, even those who do not believe, sense and see through the magic immensities of the cosmos.'