

Editorial (Ann McNelley)

The current happenings in the world, be they natural disasters or the desperate situation in the Ukraine have caused us to feel, in many ways, unable to do a great deal to help. This edition of our newsletter is dedicated to the Easter Season, with the intention that the contents will give you food for thought, reason to hope and a sense of gratitude.

Take, Thank, Break Give (“A Spring Within Us”, Richard Rohr.)

At his Last Supper, which was really the Jewish Passover meal, Jesus gave us an action, a mime, a sacred ritual of the Eucharist for a community that would summarise his core and lasting message for the world – one to keep repeating until his return. This deep message was to slowly sink in until “the bride” (the church, those who follow Jesus the Christ) is fully ready to meet “the bridegroom” (Jesus the Christ) and drink at the eternal wedding feast. I want you to note how the meal and the metaphor are based in physicality; *the incarnation continued in the elements of the universe*. Good stuff, and yet it has always been a scandal to overly spiritual people, starting at the very beginning. “This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?”

The Eucharist, which means “thanksgiving,” has four main aspects:

First, you take your whole life in your hands, as Jesus did. In very physical and scandalously incarnational language, table bread is daringly called “my body” and the alcoholic wine is called “my blood”. We are saying a radical “yes” to both the physical universe itself and the bloody suffering of our own lives and the world.

Second, you then thank God, who is the origin of all that life, and who allows and uses that death. You are making a choice for gratitude, abundance, and appreciation for Another, which has the power to radically de-centre you. Your life and death are pure gift, and must be given away in trust, just as they were given to you as gift – in an attitude of gratitude.

Third, you break it. You let your life be broken, give it away, and don’t protect it. The sharing of the small self will be the discovery of the True Self in God. “Unless the grain of wheat



dies, it remains just a grain of wheat “. The crushed grain becomes the broken bread, the whole and newly connected “Body of Christ”.

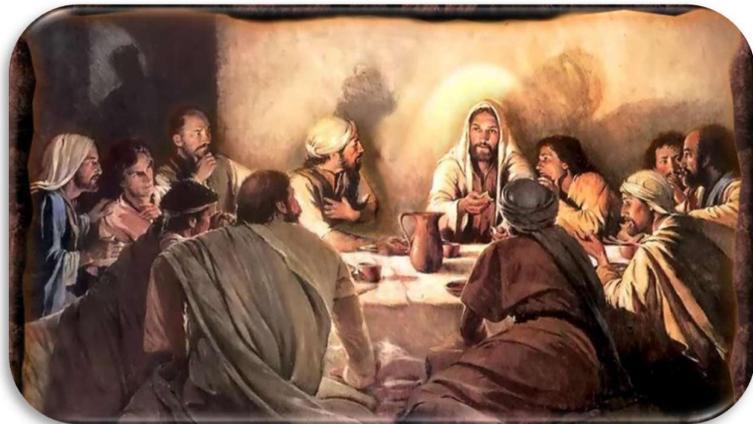
Finally, you chew on this mystery! This truth is known by participation and practice, not by more thinking and discussing. “Take this”, “eat and drink this” – not alone, but together, “until I return” and you will have the heart of the message, a “new covenant” of indwelling love that is not grounded in worthiness in any form, but merely in a willingness to participate and trust. Your drinking and eating is your agreement to “do what I can to make up in my own body all that still has to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body the church”. *We should hold ourselves apart from this meal only if we are not at least willing to try this.*

Eucharist is a risky and demanding act of radical *solidarity and responsibility with the work of God* – much more than a reward for good behaviour or any ‘prize for the perfect,’ as Pope Francis says, *Gateway to silence: I am present to Presence*.



“In his book “Throw Fire”, John Fullenbach tells the following story: In 1922, the composer Giacomo Puccini was suddenly stricken by cancer while working on his last opera, “Turandot”. Shortly before his death, he asked his students to complete his work if he was unable to do so. His students studied Turandot carefully and completed the opera. Four years later, the world premiere was performed in Milan with Puccini’s favourite student, Arturo Toscanini, directing. Everything went beautifully until the opera reached the point where Puccini was forced to put down his pen. Tears ran down Toscanini’s face. He stopped the music, put down his baton, turned to the audience and cried out, “Thus far the master wrote, but he died”.

A vast silence filled the opera house. Then Toscanini picked up his baton again, turned to the audience, smiled through his tears, and cried out “But the disciples finished his work.” When “Turandot” ended, the audience broke into thunderous applause.



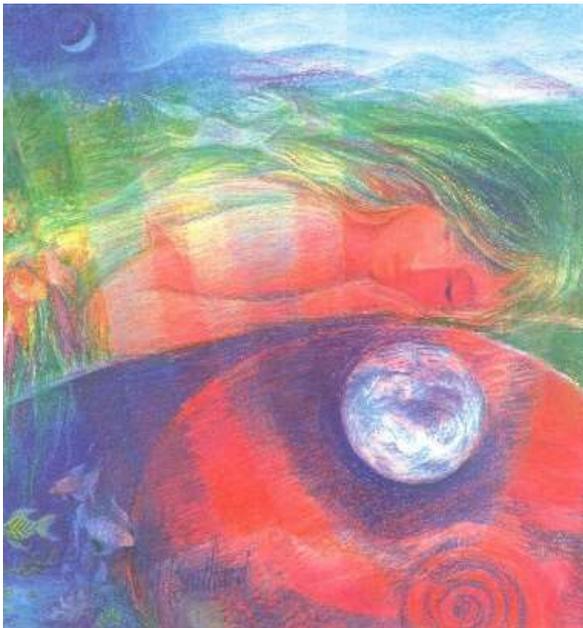
A Reflection (Elaine Morzone)

Jesus died on the Cross before the realisation of his mission to create a future in which all people would share with joy and equality in the banquet of God's creation. His desire like that of Puccini was that his disciples should work together to make his vision of the world a reality by embracing the cross in a surrender of love. Jesus transformed an ancient symbol of violence and horror into a banner of hope for a new nonviolent society. Resurrection manifests the triumph of a non-violent God over a system of domination nurtured by a culture of violence. If we are to cooperate in bringing Jesus' work to fulfillment, we need to ponder carefully our master's vision of a nonviolent society and embrace his way, refusing with him in any situation to adopt or accommodate to methods of control, force and domination as the natural solution to human conflict. Rather, we will walk with him the path of suffering and death to self for the sake of love which leads to resurrection, celebrating as the foundation of our lives the victory of nonviolent love.



Below are the first few versus of a poem by Joyce Rupp. You are invited to take a moment to sit quietly with them and feel refreshed.

The Cosmic Tree of Life



Sharing a Heartbeat, Mary Southard CSJ

I sank into the moist richness of Earth
And yielded to the softness of her breast.
I rested my ruminations in her embrace,
Relaxed my hurry in her easy peace.

I closed my eyes and waited,
Trusting in some faithful teaching.
At first I heard only the clashing jangle
of my overextended and anxious life,
But the longer I was attentive
The more I noticed the steady heartbeat
of something strong, deep, and true.

It was the cosmic tree of life singing
in the crevice of my soul.

Excerpts from an Easter Meditation by Joyce Rupp

Risen One, open our minds and hearts. Let us see and welcome your presence.

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him. (Lk 24:31)

All around me Easter is happening. God continues to reveal love, to extend invitations to growth, to offer me hope. What is God's latest revelation to me? How has this changed my life?



"Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have come to believe." (John 20:29)

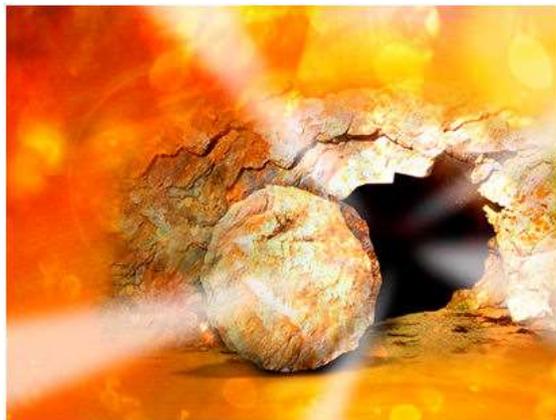
Jesus chided Thomas for his lack of faith. When all the evidence is not yet in, is it difficult for me to believe in God's movement in my life? How adept am I at living with mystery?

"Why do you look for the living among the dead?" (Lk. 24:5) So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and went to tell his disciples (Mt. 28:8).

The women went to tell the good news. They ran with excitement and joy and a bit of trepidation too. How do I proclaim, through my life and words, that I am aware of the powerful presence of God in my midst? How do I witness to what I believe?

"Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'peace be with you'" (Lk 24: 36).

As Jesus came among them, he recognised the fear and disbelief that filled his followers' hearts. He greeted them with "Peace". How will I greet myself and my world with peace during the Easter season?



Mystical Hope (Ilia Delio OSF¹ - Thursday, April 16, 2020)

Hope is the main impulse of life.

Because we are so quickly led to despair, most of us cannot endure suffering for long without some sliver of hope or meaning. However, it is worth asking ourselves about where our hope lies. My friend and colleague Cynthia Bourgeault makes a powerful distinction between what she calls ordinary hope, “tied to outcome . . . an optimistic feeling . . . because we sense that things will get better in the future” and mystical hope “that is a complete reversal of our usual way of looking at things. Beneath the ‘upbeat’ kind of hope that parts the seas and pulls rabbits out of hats, this other hope weaves its way as a quiet, even ironic counterpoint.” She writes,



Mystical Stars-in-Moonlight, Susan Cohen Thompson

We might make the following observations about this other kind of hope, which we will call *mystical hope*. In contrast to our usual notions of hope:

1. Mystical hope is not tied to a good outcome, to the future. It lives a life of its own, seemingly without reference to external circumstances and conditions.
2. It has something to do with *presence*—not a future good outcome, but the immediate experience of being met, held in communion, by something intimately at hand.
3. It bears fruit within us at the psychological level in the sensations of strength, joy, and satisfaction: an “unbearable lightness of being.” But mysteriously, rather than deriving these gifts from outward expectations being met, it seems to produce them from within.

[It] is all too easy to understate and miss that hope is not intended to be an extraordinary infusion, *but an abiding state of being*. We lose sight of the invitation—and in fact, our *responsibility*, as stewards of creation—to develop a conscious and permanent connection to this wellspring. We miss the call to become a vessel, to become a chalice into which this divine energy can pour; a lamp through which it can shine....

¹

Delio, Ilia, “Hope in a Time of Crisis,” *The Omega Center*, March 9, 2020, www.omegacenter.info/hope-in-a-time-of-crisis/

OPEN THE LINK ABOVE TO READ THE WHOLE ARTICLE.

We ourselves are not the *source* of that hope; we do not manufacture it. But the source dwells deeply within us and flows to us with an unstinting abundance, so much so that in fact it might be more accurate to say we dwell within it.

The good news is that this deeper current does exist and you actually *can* find it.... For me the journey to the source of hope is ultimately a *theological* journey: up and over the mountain to the sources of hope in the headwaters of the Christian Mystery. This journey to the wellsprings of hope is not something that will change your life in the short range, in the externals. Rather, it is something that will change your innermost way of seeing. From there, inevitably, the externals will rearrange....

The journey to the wellsprings of hope is really a journey toward the center, toward the innermost ground of our being where we meet and are met by God.

A Butterfly in the Pandemic

© Lyn McCrave, 26th March 202

Today, a butterfly, the first of the year, caught my eye
emerging into Spring and brought me hope.

For you too, little one, have been cocooned like us.
Your playmates gone, wrapped around with silence as you waited.
Could you have known how beautiful you'd be when you arose?
For you have grown in trusting patience to such a transformation.

So, may our fears and broken dreams,
our flowing tears for this world's sorrow,
transform our hearts into deeper love
to live tomorrow.

*May our lives radiate each day
the healing non-violent love of Jesus.*

Wishing you a joyful Easter!

