

One of the more positive happenings that I have seen in the news of late is the achievements of the Webb Telescope in the furthest domains of outer space. Beautiful pictures of stars in formation, colliding galaxies, magnificent nebulae. But there is more to all of this than beauty, significant as that is. I gaze at these photos and naturally have a sense of wonder. In turn, wonder leads to reverence. What I am gazing at in this immense cosmos is a macrocosm of my own self, body and spirit. I am a microcosm of this cosmos, made of the same materials as all the stars. I am not separate from it. And so I am called to reflect on what this means.

Animals, plants, minerals all know who they are and give glory to the Creator by being who they are. We humans alone have to find our true identity and act accordingly. There may possibly be other conscious and self-conscious beings in space but we do not know that yet. We humans, made in the image and likeness of God according to the Book of Genesis, can give conscious voice to all creation by our praise and reverence of the Creator. But we also have the choice of turning in on ourselves and taking that glory for our own lives. Abraham Heschel, twentieth century Rabbi and social activist, is quoted as saying that the great tragedy of the west is we have lost the sense of the sacred. Children have this sense naturally and are in tune with the glory of the cosmos but self-centeredness often takes over their lives.

The Gospel of Luke stresses the special place of the poor, the little people, the anawin, people on the peripheries of our world. And Luke focuses on Jesus' consistent teaching on the dangers of riches and our being possessed by possessions. Jesus does not condemn material possessions or riches. He associated with well-to-do friends and liked to go to dinners. But he preaches detachment from anything outside of us. It is false to who we are to depend on external possessions. "Be on your guard against all greed", Jesus says, "For one's life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." And our first reading, from the Book of Ecclesiastes, shows Jesus to be in the biblical tradition when we hear "Vanity of vanities. What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? Vanity of vanities".

For the past week Pope Francis has been in Canada, particularly addressing the indigenous peoples of the land. He has preached penance and justice for the

wrongs done to these peoples. The Pope has helped us to see the beauty and values that these people offer to us as they receive back their own identity and traditions. They challenge our notions of material possessions, consumer values and our relationship to all of creation. Here is one quote from the Pope, “Here, immersed in creation, we can sense another beating: the maternal heartbeat of the earth. Just as the hearts of babies in the womb beat in harmony with those of their mothers, so in order to grow as people, we need to harmonize our own rhythms of life with those of creation, which gives us life.”

With all the problems of the world, our nation, our church today, I want to learn to live in harmony with creation. When I go for a walk, I do not wear my wrist watch. I do not want to know what time it is. Even worse is to witness people on smart phones and actually speaking aloud on them while ignoring the birds, the clouds, the waters in motion, the trees blowing in the wind. The positive work we do is to open ourselves to all of creation, our part in it, our being one with all that is. The negative part of this work is to repair the harm we have done to the world with our over-consumption of resources, our poisoning of the air and waters, our lack of reverence for every animal, plant and mineral that forms our cosmos.

I fear the temptation to cynicism. “What can I do?” I see the temptation to what has been called *acedia*, an indifference that shows itself in a lack of energy to begin new things, in a lack of passion, an attitude of sourness toward life. How are we to overcome these tendencies? We have to focus on wonder, reverence, gratitude, love of life and evolution’s journey into life. This is God’s world, gifted to all the beings who inhabit it. We are transient dwellers on it. When the European colonists landed in the new world, they declared the land to be theirs. This baffled the indigenous peoples who could not fathom how anyone could own the land but rather saw it as a gift to be used by all with reverence. We have much to learn from our American forebears. They are more in tune with the gospel of Jesus Christ than many of us white Christians of the western world.

I leave you with a quote from the medieval mystic, Mechtild of Magdeburg. She wrote:

‘The day of my spiritual awakening was the day I saw - and knew I saw – all things in God and God in all things.’

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