

Prayer in a Cosmic Consciousness

By Christine Loughlin, OP

We come to the time of the Spring Equinox. The dark night greets the day of equal light and relinquishes to the coming season of the long day with its encompassing light, warm breezes and soaking rains. Thomas Berry says an integral order exists in our world that bonds all of the members in participating governance. We experience this self-governance in the seasonal changes. When we participate in the flamboyant flowering and ardent renewal of life with our festivals and liturgies, we are one with the self-governing Earth. In our celebrations of the Great Mystery of the universe manifest in Earth's abundance, we fulfill our special human role.

Throughout the latter half of this century we have witnessed profound revelations of the Great Mystery. Scientific knowledge has given us the geological, the historical, and in a most unexpected way, even the spiritual unfolding story of the universe. Eyes have seen and ears have heard "what has been hidden from the beginning." Through giant telescopes we watch the great cosmic expansion; with huge receptors we receive the radio signals coming back from the birth time of the universe.

Most startling we have discovered that an inner psychic expansion is commensurate with the outer cosmic expansion. The inner expansion is the deepening understanding and conscious awakening of the story. We see a new Reality! Our perception of creation has changed.

Until the latter half of this century we believed in a static world. We thought everything was certain, stable, predictable. This revelation dares us to consider—what if the Divine Spirit is creative and dynamic? What if faith is self-fulfilling evolutionary change and creativity? What if the spiritual life has to do with courageous faith instead of static belief? That spiritual presence, that primal wisdom, is the force that evoked each mutation, each natural selection toward a more complex communion that is now expressed in the scarlet maple, the breaching whale, the trilling lark, the flowering meadow. Art, drama, music, poetry is our human way of entering into the self-fulfilling concert.

Religious stories and practices are born in time and cultures. Now that the human community has seen with new eyes our bluegreen Earth from space and heard the empirical evidence of an evolving universe beyond our previous wildest imaginings, we are recreating and relocating our place in the story.

What is prayer in a cosmic consciousness? What is the prayer of a cosmic pilgrim? Chet Raymo, scientist, mystic, lover of the natural world posed this question to us. In his writing he describes the evolutionary sojourners of unfolding creation as "those of us who have chosen to negotiate the rickety footbridge of life with only a heron at our side."

When the sacrificial moment of radical change comes and chaotic creativity looms on the edge of space/time, the universe releases infinite possibilities. The soul of the artist bears witness to Truth.

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Poet/songwriter Carolyn McDade sings:

Heron lays a wing
A dark and shaggy wing
Upon the marshland flying
....

Thus sings her soul, thus sings her soul
Heron living soul

....

Blessed the generations struggling to be free
For deep though the sorrow,
Shining in the soul
Life lays a wing/ shaggy and whole.

Those of us here now are the ones called to surrender to the emerging reality and spiritual awakening. Accompanied by the whole creation who have endured the evocations of the past we listen for the flutter of the wing and the upsweep of air to continue our exodus.