

Grace in the spirit



Wonder of creation: Creation abounds with the grace of God

Continuing a series of articles for the Year of Grace, SR MARIE T. FARRELL reflects on encountering the grace of God in others and in creation

SET between Pentecost 2012 and Pentecost 2013, the Year of Grace excites our wonder at discovering anew the many and various signs of the presence of Christ our Lord in the world.

The year has unfolded, as it were, accompanied by an ancient mantra, Veni Creator Spiritus: "Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your Faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your divine Love; send forth your Spirit, O Lord, that [we] may renew the face of the earth".

For all who have the "inward" eye, the face of Christ is found in every human face and beyond.

The "glory of God" shining on the face of Jesus transfigured on Mount Tabor is an intimation of the "glory" that lies hidden to the "outward" eye unless revealed by the Spirit.

The apostles on the mountain experienced a momentary glimpse of the "glory"; afterwards they looked up to see "only Jesus". Let us go to the holy mountain in silent prayer ... (Luke 9:28-36)

We thank St Irenaeus for what has become an established Christian proverb: "The glory of God is the human person fully alive, and to be alive is to behold the vision of God".

Let us catch the force of the "now" and the "not yet fulfilled" experience of the "glory" that we bear in extending the reign of the Spirit here and now.

St Paul knew well the meaning of having the Spirit's dwelling within him.

His was an insight of "amazing grace" of how the Holy Spirit, who with one's human spirit witnesses to our being children of God.

Let us pray earnestly for the grace to allow the Spirit to take hold of our created spirits in divine intimacy, for then we shall know that:

"the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

If we truly believe this, then we shall surely know "that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose ..." (Romans 8: 26-28)

A similar theme taken up in the Letter to the Ephesians, stresses that we are called to contribute to the building up of the Body of Christ, "until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ..." (Ephesians 4:13)

Previous reflections have considered the significance of meeting the eyes of Christ in the eyes of our brothers and sisters no matter their circumstances or how their presence impacts directly or indirectly on our lives.

During this Year of Grace, we have been asked to "think outside the box" in terms of "who is my brother or my sister?"

The media, especially television, brings them into our homes day after day.

It is impossible not to care, or pray, or act in appropriate ways when we enjoy an "alive" awareness that the Holy Spirit graces our spirits with divine generosity.

The issue of human relationship with the universe is something of a moral imperative for Christians facing ecological crises.

Therefore, it deserves to be included in consideration during this Year of Grace.

Our lasting home is not here.

However, this earth is where we presently "live and move and have our being" (Acts 2:17).

As a child, I was taught this poem by my grandmother; I offer it as a way of "seeing" the face of Christ in a cosmic way:

*"I see his blood upon the rose
And in the stars the glory of his eyes,
His body gleams amid eternal snows.
His tears fall from the skies.
I see his face in every flower,
The thunder and the singing of the birds
Are but his voice – and carven by his
power*

*Rocks are his written words.
All pathways by his feet are worn,
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,
His crown of thorns is twined in every
thorn,
his cross is every tree."* (Joseph Mary Plunkett)

Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin, scientist and theologian, has inspired many to appreciate the relationship of grace with the presence of God in creation. We conclude with excerpts from his prayer to Christ as Cosmic Lord:

"Lord Jesus Christ, you truly contain within your gentleness, within your humanity, all the unyielding immensity and grandeur of the world.

"And it is because of this, it is because there exists in you this ineffable synthesis of what our human thought and experience would never have dared to join together in order to adore them – element and totality, the one and the many, mind and matter, the infinite and the personal; it is because of the indefinable contours which this complexity gives to your appearance and your activity, that my heart, enamored of cosmic reality, gives itself passionately to you ...



"I love you, Lord Jesus, because of the multitude who shelter within you, and when, if one clings closely to you, one can hear with all the other beings murmuring, praying, weeping ... You are the Centre at which all things meet, and which stretches out over all things so as to draw them back into itself: I love you for the extensions of your body and soul to the farthest corners of creation through grace, through life, through matter ...

"Lord Jesus, you are the Centre towards which all things are moving; if it be possible, make a place for us all in the company of those elect and holy ones whom your loving care has liberated, one by one, from the chaos of our present existence and who now are being slowly incorporated into you in the unity of a new earth." (Hymn of the Universe: Pensées 1)

Sr Marie T Farrell, a Sister of Mercy, was formerly senior lecturer in theology and spirituality at the Catholic Institute of Sydney, and is still involved in adult theological education through workshops, occasional talks and writing. Her book *God Among Us: Australian Images of Jesus* was launched by St Paul's Publications in time for the Year of Grace.

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