

“Loving the Questions” or “Love in the Questions?”

PART ONE



In the days following the great feast of Easter the gospels seem to be full of questions! The circulation of the ISMAPNG Report and the accompanying readings invite us to reflect on other important questions. Among those most pertinent are those asked by Jesus of our “old” friend, Mary of Magdala: “Why are you weeping?”

The magnitude of the cosmos, its complexity and order can be overwhelming as we ponder our relationship with God amidst this complexity. There comes a realisation that our small “blue marble” continually holds for us the issues with which we struggle: living together as one human family, diversity, continuity, conflict, life, death, violence and so much more – often bringing tears to our eyes.

Our world is full of ‘unknowing.’ The heavens are more vast than most of us ever thought and they are still evolving. Earth, too continues to unfold its relationship within the universe and with God. Chief Seattle gives voice to the integrated understanding more often held by First Peoples around the world.

**“All things share the same breath – the beast, the tree, the [hu]man.
The air shares its spirit with all the life it supports.”ⁱ**

In the 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis repeats the phrase ‘everything is connected’ throughout the document. When we cry into the ‘ether’ about the complexities of human relationships, we may well be hearing the question addressed to Mary in the garden; “Why are you weeping?”

By way of response, we know how heartening it is to have someone call us by name. Both Mary and Jesus recognised each other by name. Their deep love for one another was obvious in the simple, yet

direct conversation between them – no surplus verbiage here! The simple and silent presence of one with another – the ease with which we are present to those we love - is often a touchstone of love, indeed at the heart of our contemplative life. What we know is that we are called to see, listen to and live into all relationships in new ways.

Bring to mind an experience that led you to utter awe – a beautiful scene, an experience of oneness, a stretching of your mind and heart beyond what you could imagine...

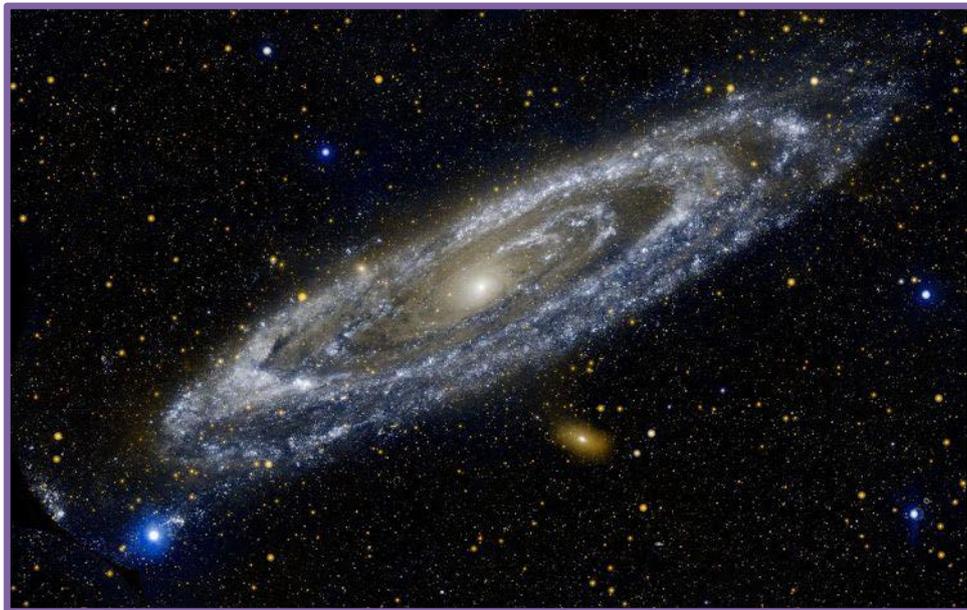
Let us pray that our understanding that we breathe together and are all connected deepens – and that the wonder of this reality will continue to create awe in us and urge us to be co-creators in all that we do. May we learn to love the questions this privilege offers.

Anne McGuire and Patricia McDermott

¹ Chief Seattle. Oration: 1854

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PART TWO



In times of retreat – on our respective ‘inner journeys’ we are challenged by the question “...and who is God for you?” So often we realise that the images of God we learned have changed over the years and those catechism images seem more and more puzzling. How can God be forgiving and yet unchanging? One would think that forgiveness is itself is an act of change. An old white man with a beard becomes less attractive – even unlikeable in a society which values multiculturalism and inclusion. Patricia Crowley OSB echoes the experience of most vowed religious:

Having daily prayed the ancient psalms and cherished so much of the biblical writings for most of my adult life, I know the articulation of the utter breadth of human experiences in dialogue with itself and with the Holy. I know the diverse images we humans use to try and grasp the ineffable reality of that which we call God.ⁱ

In the encounter between the newly resurrected Jesus and Mary of Magdala in the garden, Jesus asks the question which is perhaps one of the most pertinent to our own lives: *“Who are you looking for?”*

Prayer with and in Scripture is so often a source of deep and lasting nourishment. In recent years we are becoming more mindful of God’s presence in creation. When the psalmist talks of green pastures and restful waters [Ps 23] we feel connected to creation, including rich healthy soil as well as polluted earth air and waterways. So, being curious seekers we find a desire to know and understand the interconnectedness of all of God’s creation.

We embrace the gift of immersing ourselves in all that ‘sings’ of God – the bird song, the laugh of the kookaburra, the morning mists which seem to drop us into a place of unknowing. As we experience a world seeking absolutes in polar opposites, that which was once unshakeable seems now more like the shifting sands of a desert. Our world shrinks and expands as we are bombarded with global realities - and yet we have come to know ‘God ever abiding and ever emerging...’ and we find ourselves coming to terms with a ‘both/and’ appreciation of God. The poet and novelist Maria Rainer Rilke expresses it this way

“In deep nights I dig for you like treasure... for the beauty of you that has not happened yet”ⁱ

Let us place our feet on solid ground, connecting with Earth and all creation, the lands of our family, our history, our home and become aware of being one with the Universe story and discover that our silent prayer in contemplation;

“holds truth humbly; it teaches one how to practise compassion, mercy, loving kindness, patience, forgiveness and humility”ⁱⁱ

In the weeks leading to our Institute Chapter may we be resolved to intentionally embrace and promote all that unites us, remembering that *“The God who calls us into the fullness of life is ahead, not behind us.”ⁱⁱⁱ* Indeed - *“Who are we looking for?”*

Anne McGuire and Patricia McDermott