

OWITF Reflections

Reflection Letter 12, December 2016

COSMIC CHRIST

Mike Scott has a refrain in one of his songs: 'I will look twice at you until I see the Christ in you'. If we all decided to try and put this into practice how different might our communities be? Perhaps we could make this our mantra for the season of Advent!

In Sue monk Kidd's book on her own spiritual journey *When the Heart Waits* she describes a moment during the lead-up to Christmas when she encounters a monk and greets him with the usual greeting 'Merry Christmas' only to receive the response 'May the Christ be born in you this Christmas'. At the time she thought it a most unusual greeting but in later years she came to realise that in fact these few words contained the essence of the spiritual journey of transformation. The movement from being a self-centred person to a person who has allowed Christ to take over the heart of his/her being. In another story she has an old man lament "they call me a Christian but I have never become Christ". Paul in one of his letters says "I live, no not I, but Christ lives in me". In other words Paul no longer sees his life as centred around his own thoughts and desires, his own self but he has learned to operate out of a Christ-centred mentality. The season of Advent is a time to focus on this transformation; the journey from 'ego centre' to 'Christ centre'.

Many times in Advent we encounter the words, "Come Lord Jesus". Are we ready for all that those words entail? Are we ready to begin the journey of transformation into the Christ? Richard Rohr in his booklet, *Preparing for Christmas*, reminds us that we should be more focused on The Christ than on the baby in the crib. There is a danger that we over sentimentalise Christmas and water down its prophetic message. He says, 'We do the Gospel no favour when we make Jesus, the Eternal Christ, a baby able to ask little or no adult response from us'. Our so-called traditional carols do not help either. Our Silent Night or Away in a Manger are fine for an evening of nostalgia but they have no part to play in an adult response to the Christmas Event.

Perhaps Jackson Browne's Rebel Jesus is a little more relevant:

***We guard our world with locks and guns
And we guard our fine possessions
And once a year when Christmas comes
We give to our relations
And perhaps we give a little to the poor
If the generosity should seize us
But if any one of us should interfere
In the business of why there are poor
They get the same as the rebel Jesus.***

On a cosmic scale we humans are not the only ones being challenged to transformation into Christ. Teilhard de Chardin spoke of the whole of creation being transformed into Christ. He referred to this as the Omega Point. He saw Christ being incarnated into existence with the great flaring forth of the Universe 13.7 billion years ago. Since that time the Christ has been evolving into completion. God is up ahead drawing all things to the Godself. Creation is an ongoing evolving process which will only be completed when God has drawn the whole of creation into the fullness of love.

Jesus spoke of this as the reign of God and this was the central message of his teaching. Building up the body of Christ is nothing less than the transformation of our world. This is The Great Work to which Thomas Berry refers. Paul when writing to the Ephesians wrote: 'Rather living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ'. Jesus in John 17:21 says 'That all may be one as you Father are in me and I in you'. Building up the mystical body of Christ is our task and this does not refer to increasing the numbers in the Catholic Church as we were lead to believe in days gone by. It is nothing less than playing our part in transforming the whole of creation into Christ. How can I take up this challenge? It begins with transforming myself.

Louis M Savary talks about the Christ as the universal symbol for the ultimate destiny of all creation. The process began 13.7 billion years ago and will only be completed when all will be drawn into the fullness of God. He says in his book *The New Spiritual Exercises* "God the purest of Sacred Energy- Perfect Love- decided to pour that love out and gave birth to the Universe. It is the essence of love to share and generate, to be outgoing and altruistic. The Universe was created out of Love, it is driven by Love, sustained by Love and directed towards the fullness of Love." This process was personalised in the life of Jesus of Nazareth who lived his life totally open to God and was transformed into the Christ. This transformation was completed at the moment of resurrection. Jesus of Nazareth became Jesus the Christ and that is the destiny for each one of us. Christ begins to be born in us during our lifetime and is only completed in the moment of our rising from the dead. This ought to be our focus during Advent. How is the birthing of Christ progressing in my life? The more Christ-like I become the more human I become. Jesus of Nazareth reached the fullness of his humanness on the way to being transformed into the Christ.

Richard Rohr says that as Catholic Christians we have been more focused on the human Jesus and have lost sight of the Cosmic Christ, that universal symbol for the ultimate destiny of all creation. The pious sentimentality that speaks of 'waiting for the baby Jesus' is fine for the children. As adults the challenge to 'become Christ' is an infinitely more daunting project.

So I, and this whole world of ours are on this tremendous journey into Christ. Leonard Cohen, who passed away recently, put it this way in the final line of his wonderful song Anthem 'And everyone to love will come, but like a refugee'.

It is not a coincidence that Jesus began his life as a refugee and ended it stripped of everything even family and friends. We are not short of examples of refugees in our world today. They have left all behind, they have few possessions. They are homeless and stateless and completely dependent on the goodness of others. But this letting go of everything seems to be what it takes to be transformed into Love, the Cosmic Christ. To conclude, a prayer from Sue Monk Kidd:

***Walk with me out to the rim of life
Beyond security
Take me to the exquisite edge of courage
And release me to become.***