

Sensitivity in the Cosmic Order

By Christine Loughlin, OP

Human rituals are folded into the cosmic order. They are our conversations with the Great Mystery enacted in the ever-repeating cosmic drama of birth, death and rebirth. Of the four Earth Festivals that make our seasonal cycle, the Winter Solstice reaches deep into the human psyche as we open souls to embrace rebirth after death.

Darkness descends all around us. We have chosen an enemy; we are in a nation poised for war. The mood of our nation's people seeks security and votes for power that limits diversity and disruption that are the very stuff of creative engagement toward strong community and a people's democracy. Neither the forests nor the oceans nor the air are exempt from the power that seeks to isolate and secure us from a disintegration that is inherent in the very process of on-going life. As weaponry becomes more sophisticated, the ocean depths and the atmospheric layers are the means and matter of destructive forces. Earth is a weapon of war.

We hope for a miracle. To enter fully into this moment of Winter Solstice we find our way to the Source where the impossible is made possible. By habit we look for intervention from the outside, some supernatural occurrence that alters or removes the cause of our dread and anxiety. We long for the miracle to arrive by way of another; may someone else be the channel of grace overflowing with gratuitous blessing.

The cosmic order captures our attention now for things are of cosmic proportion. In the elongated darkness of a winter's night, we remember the sacrifice of an ancient star, heavy with promise. All the elements needed for fins and fur, for hands and hearts, for the capacity of scientific knowing and self-reflective consciousness rode in the violent shattering of a second generation star in the Milky Way galaxy. Over the eons disturbance and intrusion awakened the cloud of promise. We are the children of that promise. We lift our minds and hearts to celebrate the marvel of an intimate relation between a whirling blue-green planet with eyes for seeing and ears for hearing and hearts for loving with a third generation star that daily surrenders hydrogen atoms to fulfill the promise.

In the natural order of the universe, rebirth requires death. We draw closer now in our own deepening understanding of the marvels of creation to see our human affairs woven into the whole web of life. No wonder we shudder in terror and seek the power to prevent the losses that are required when creation acts. There is terror in knowing that one is the substance out of which miracles are made. In the human venture a psychic violence is required as old patterns of perception perish.

In the religious story of my tradition retold in the winter season, we delight in the *fiat* of a young woman, a yes to nativity that held promise of a new order. There is growing awareness in all of us of the existential fear that must be embraced when such a yes is spoken. Terror is tangible when the infinite is made finite.

We are at a cosmological moment of grace. Our human subjectivity is alive with the beauty and terror of the cosmic drama. If we fully grasped all that lies before us, we would succumb to the demands required by the dance. All life forms before us so nobly prepared the way. To accept the grace and enter the moment of crisis is to surrender into the ecstasy of cosmic transfiguration. The way in is to develop our sensitivity to the terror and beauty. May we see the suffering and destruction, sense the eyes of passing species looking out at us, feel the cost to the natural world for the coming of our technological society, recognize our broken relationship

with the whole phenomena of the infinite made visible. When our hearts tremble in the wake of such violence, we will see an encompassing beauty alive in the center of every dimension of life and a compassionate presence will emerge hidden from the foundation called forth by the beauty embraced with a new depth of human consciousness.

At the head of our driveway sits the stone structure nestled in front of the Norway maples. The oratory becomes too small each year to hold the number of folks who come to enter the celebration of the Winter Solstice. We sing the songs that stir a new consciousness ~ *Return to Who You Are, This Ancient Love, The Call of Things*. There is a song that has a special place in the history of the Civil Rights movement in our country. We are very conscious of that history and sensitive to our singing *This Little Light of Mine*. Yet every Solstice eve there are those who clamor to sing that song. I sense now the deepening awareness in the hearts of all the friends and family who form the community of Crystal Spring. The light that is recognized now is nothing less than the great Flaring Forth as it comes in its transfigured form to burn in the hearts and consciousness of everyone gathered. We sing one another forth into a new moment, embracing the energy of each, and in radical humility accept that we are substance out of which miracles are made.

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