

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 9, 2021
Reflection by Sister Patricia Crowley, OSB
Acts 10:25-26; I John 4:7-10; John 15:9-17

In the Resurrection, Jesus becomes the Christ, the Universal Christ. We have forgotten what that mystery might mean.

Today is Mother's Day! Reportedly founded by Ann Reeves Jarvis and promulgated by abolitionist Juliet Ward Howe who, it is claimed, promoted this day as a "pacifist reaction to the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War" to encourage young men trained for war to remember the values of mercy and love they were taught by their mothers. " She wanted them to re-imagine life just a bit.

Yesterday was the feast of Julian of Norwich!, who, among other reflections, spoke of Jesus as "mother". That stretches us a bit!

Happy Mother's Day to all the mothers in our lives!

Today is the sixth Sunday of Easter and we continue to listen to John's experience of the mystery we celebrate in this season. Today's three readings invite us to expanding our minds and hearts in relation to the profound mystery of the Risen Christ.

In Acts, Cornelius, a Gentile convert, had gathered his friends and relatives at his house in Caesarea to hear Peter speak. Cornelius had been praying and in the midst of prayer had a vision in which he was told to invite Peter to his home. Luke, as the author of Acts, gives quite a bit of time to this drama and probably because it is one of the passages that confirms God's message is to go beyond the Jewish people, beyond what people thought at that time.

In the 1st letter of John, which according to the Catholic Study Bible, was written to "combat certain false ideas, especially about Jesus..." stretches a human understanding of love in the now familiar words "love is of God" and "if we love one another, God remains in us". Those were undoubtedly revolutionary and maybe controversial words at that time.

In the gospel of John, we hear: "Remain in my love," Which also is quite familiar to us and we might ask ourselves, just exactly does this mean today? We recognize that this is "good news" and today ask "How so?"

The etymology of the word "remain"? *to stay again!*

Remain in my love....just as I remain in God's (the father or mother...) love. There is the catch....God's love has always been and it is there that we are invited to remain.

The phrase that caught my attention in today's gospel was: *I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his (her) master is doing. I have called you friends because I have told you everything I have heard.*

A slave does not understand.....a friend does.....We are friends. Do we understand?

So....the question is: Who is this Risen Christ we have been celebrating during this Easter season?

Last summer, two things converged in my life. I had just finished listening to the audio version of Richard Rohr's The Universal Christ, How a Forgotten reality can Change Everything We see, Hope for, and Believe. That book had stretched my mind and heart into new awarenesses. Do we remember what the impact of the Christ was? What was that "forgotten reality" that so enlivened the early Christians?

At the same time, I was invited to teach Christology to Martha, the sole first year novice in Nubuamis. As I prepared to teach her about Christ, I was haunted by Rohr's book. As a result, I probably got more out of our course together than Martha did but I left my notes with her for later pondering.

In reading the hard copy of Rohr's book right now, I continue to be stretched. So, when I ended up reflecting on this gospel passage for this morning, I could not but focus on his words a bit. What is that "forgotten reality that can change everything"?

The central message is (page 2) – *The 'Christ mystery' is the indwelling of the Divine Presence in everyone and in everything.*

That echoes Teilhard's sense of a *Christosphere*, of the energy of *Love* that is part of all matter. In some way it seems so familiar and yet if we really "get" this or even glimpse at its truth – (preface) ...*once you begin to see it, you won't be able to unsee it and it will change the way you see everything.*

We know that theology and, of course, contemplative prayer are all about the unfolding of the Divine Reality in our human existence.

Over the centuries, if you think about it, we, as humans, have gradually seemed to have limited the Divine Presence, focusing it in the Church, on the Eucharistic bread, on the "real presence", on the Mystical Body of Christ. All of that is good and true. Perhaps, there is more to this mystery.

Rohr suggests (as do other writers) that (page 4) *we gradually limited the Divine Presence to the single body of Christ when perhaps it is as ubiquitous as light itself.* Think about that. Light is not what we see but rather how we see everything. Rohr poses the question – (page 5) *What if Christ is another name for everything in its fullness?* What if the reality of

this Risen Christ is in everyone (as Benedictines we do recognize that truth....) and in every thing (earth, the cosmos, the ocean etc.)??? not in a pantheistic way but in a seemingly unimaginable way in the Christ. (page 7) *A cosmic notion of the Christ competes with and excludes no one but includes everyone and everything.*

Some of you have glimpsed this in your love of animals and of the cherished earth. Laudato Si has invited us recently to ponder this mystery. Elizabeth Johnson's book Ask the Beasts, Darwin and the God of Love does too! In her recent talk at CTU, she suggested that, in this time of naming our pronouns, we might focus on the pronoun "US" in pondering the Divine Reality in our lives – we are, indeed, one with every person, animal, plant, star, universe.....and the energy that makes that so is "love".

Our church invites us to probe this mystery, and especially so at this season of Easter.

The only really absolute mysteries in Christianity are the self-communication of God in the depths of existence – which we call grace, and in history which we call Christ. (Karl Rahner, SJ)

This season invites us, as the friends not slaves, to pause and to ponder this present reality of the resurrected Christ, to be a little more conscious of the Divine presence as light and, *as ubiquitous as light itself.*

Mystery, we know, is that about which you and I can always learn more. This mystery of the ongoing presence of the Risen Christ warrants our openness to ever new framings of that reality.

The cosmic dance continues to stretch our ability to grasp a little of this reality. In this challenging time in our history, Merton's words are pertinent: *No despair of ours can alter the reality of things, not stain the joy of the cosmic dance, which is always there.* (Thomas Merton as quoted by Rohr)

May the mystery of the risen Christ continually invite you to "the cosmic dance"!