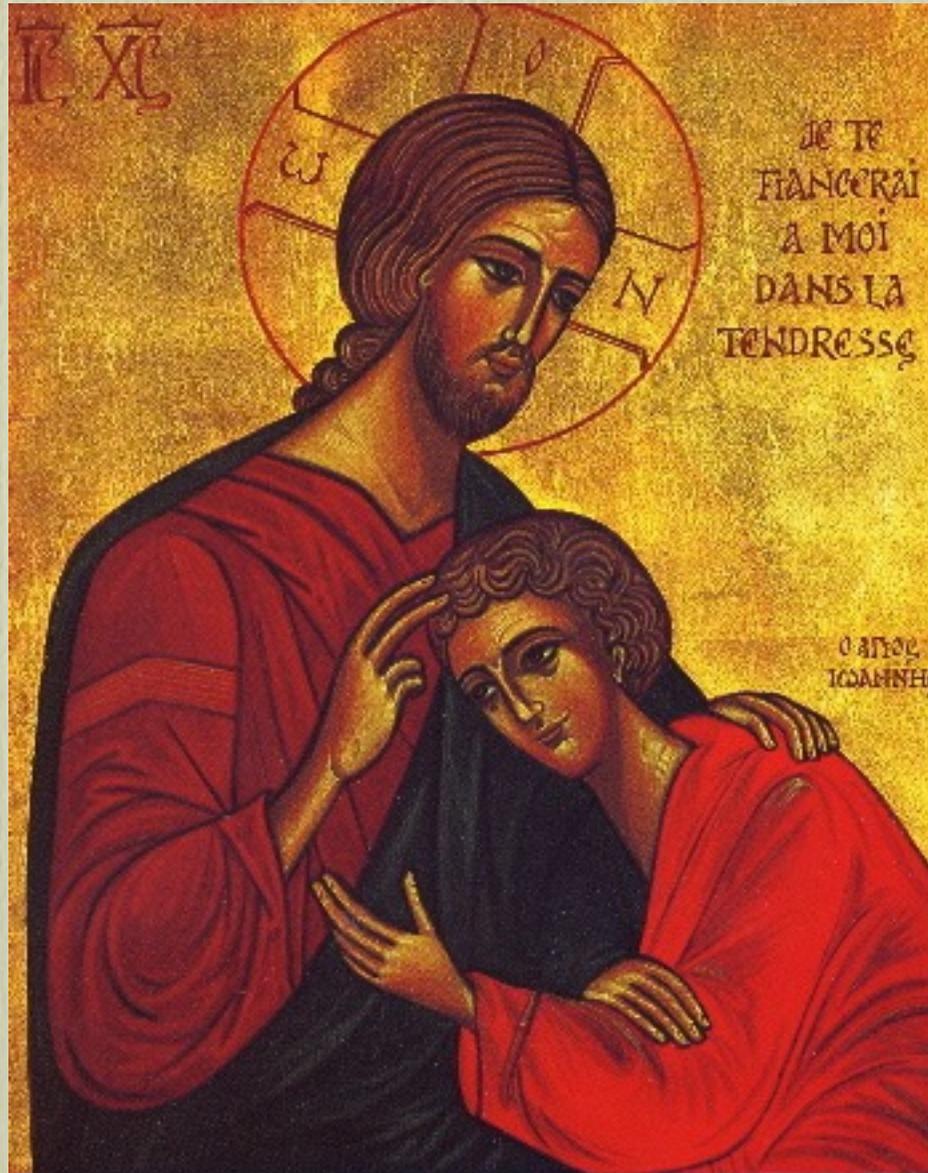


03. Consecrated in Love



I. God

We have a natural urge to want to know, but we discover that everything which we come to know is contingent. It does not have within itself sufficient reason for its existing. There must exist a Reality ['God'] which is not contingent, and is the creating source, the sustaining ground and the final goal of all that we experience, including ourselves.

Our urge to know is itself propelled by our longing to be in communion with all that is. For we are made for love. Love is an experience of our interconnection, our communion with everything else that is also becoming. The other remains other, but another to which and to whom we belong. And this is because everything we experience is drawn towards the Other in whose being we all participate, the One 'in whom we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28).

We are attracted outwards to ever more intimate communion with the world around us, and when we experience love (the word we use for this communion), we are attracted inwards to plumb the depths of the inner world which love discloses.

Our experience is that our instinctive desire to be in love (to give and receive love and to enjoy communion) connects us to reality. Our desire, however, is limitless.

If there is no object that can satisfy this desire, the desire is in the final analysis absurd. In the choice between absurdity and Mystery why not choose Mystery which points to the existence of the infinite One with whom ultimately we long to be in communion: the one we call 'God'?

'Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things God has made' (Romans 1:20).

2. Wrong ways of thinking about God

There are as many concepts of God as there are minds that conceive. For God cannot be observed directly and put to the test and be subject to our comprehension and definition.

Many ways of understanding God are clearly erroneous.

The so-called 'god' who controls the world from outside;.

The so-called 'god' who is exalted at the expense

The so-called 'god' who

- upholds vested interests
- justifies the successful,
- supports apartheid, patriarchy, hypocritical piety, immature dependency and infantile illusions.

‘God’ as a projection of our fears: fate, stars, demons

‘God’ as a projection of our needs: self-indulgence,
prestige, power

‘God’ as support for our insecurity: anchoring a
meaningless life in submission to a power-object

This is a distraction because it ignores or masks our
heart’s desire

We can avoid false religion by being an agnostic

A better way is through authentic religion.

Rejection of false gods does not justify the failure to explore the implications of our experience and to open ourselves to the mystery revealed there.

We must remember, however, as we explore the question of God, that all concepts of God without exception are exploratory ('heuristic'). They are born of longing and shaped by religious experience.

In conceiving God we dare to reach beyond what we do know to the transcendent mystery. In all areas of discovery, concepts are best fitted for defining and eliminating wrong approaches. This is especially true of our concepts of God. They assist in keeping us on the right track, facing the right way; they do not contain the journey's end; they cannot define the Infinite.

God remains on the mountain; no golden calf, no set of words, can substitute for him and for the surprise and demands of God's presence and action in our lives. It is right to speak of God, but we must pray that we make some sense, and not too much nonsense as we do.

3. God as revealed by Jesus

The writings of Jesus' disciples demonstrate that because of their experience of Jesus they came to a new way of conceiving God and so to a new appreciation of creation. To believe that there is only one God is to believe in the interconnectedness of everything; it is to believe that there is one source of everything.

To believe in God as revealed by Jesus is to believe that everything that exists participates in the being of this one God; that every insight into the truth by anyone is an insight into God; that all people, whatever their race, enjoy revelation, because all owe their being to this one Creator and Sustainer of life.

At the heart of Jesus' experiences he knew that the word of God to him was one of love.

He experienced a corresponding movement of love in his spirit and he understood God as the one who loved him (his 'Abba').

Jesus showed this in the way he treated others as sacred and drew them into the communion of love which he experienced.

This is confirmed by the experience of Jesus' disciples. They experienced this especially in the way Jesus continued to trust and to love throughout his ordeal on the cross. Even the centurion was impressed: 'When the centurion, who stood facing him, saw the way Jesus died, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"'(Mark 15:39).

'They will look upon the one they have pierced'
(John 19:37)

Jesus showed what we human beings are and can be. He also demonstrated his faith in God as a God of love. Paul could write of Jesus: 'If we are faithless, he remains faithful; he cannot deny his own self' (2Timothy 2:13).

God loves us as we are, not as we would like to be: 'God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us' (Romans 5:8). It is this faithful love of God that enables us to move from where we are into closer and closer communion with God.

Jesus' disciples experienced Jesus as God's focal word. Because of the love given them by Jesus and because of the spirit of love that Jesus poured into their hearts, they came to know God as love, revealed in Jesus the lover, and experienced in the spirit of loving that welled up from within them. The world is not created out of nothing. It is created out of love.

In *God for us* (HarperSanFrancisco 1991) Catherine LaCugna writes:

‘The reality of Jesus is given in his being-from, being-with and being-for others ... He epitomises in himself communion of the divine and the human’ (page 293).

‘The Spirit is the freedom of God permeating, animating, quickening, incorporating, affiliating, engrafting, consummating the creature out of love. The movements of the Spirit of God cannot be controlled, domesticated, or regulated, but the presence of the Spirit can clearly be observed where there is koinônia [communion in Jesus’ love] (page 299).

The Wonder of God : God-Word-Spirit

Jesus invites us to pray always (Luke 18:1). To enjoy such prayer we commit ourselves to make space in our lives to focus on God within. The purer our inner gaze and the more intimate our inner communion the more we will recognise God's presence in the world as well as God's Word (God's self-communication) coming to us in and through every creature, every event and every encounter.

Constantly aided by God's Word, especially by the Word-made-flesh, we focus on God's Spirit and so on our life in the Spirit (our 'spiritual life'): our listening to God within and our responding in love to God; our communion with God within our own being in the experience we call prayer. At the same time we do not forget that this focus allows the Spirit to tune our being ever more sensitively to God's Word.

When, through our communion with God's inner Spirit, we experience an echo of God's Word that comes to us from outside, we are vibrating to the divine harmony. We are giving ourselves over to the gravity of grace drawing us to the heart of the Father.

Catherine LaCugna:

‘The doctrine of the Trinity is a theory about the essence of God revealed and bestowed in the person of Christ and in the permanent presence of the Spirit’ (page 334).

‘The purpose of the doctrine of the Trinity is to affirm that God who comes to us and saves us in Christ and remains with us as Spirit is the true living God (page 380).

‘The perfection of God is the perfection of love, of communion, or personhood. Divine perfection is the antithesis of self-sufficiency. Rather it is the absolute capacity to be who and what one is by being from and for another. The living God is the God who is alive in relationship, alive in communion with the creature, alive with desire for union with every creature. God is so thoroughly involved in every last detail of creation that if we could truly grasp this it would altogether change how we would approach each moment of our lives. Everything that exists manifests the mystery of the living God’ (page 304).

‘Perichôrêsis, embodied in inclusiveness, community and freedom, is the “form of life” for God and the ideal of human beings whose communion with each other reflects the life of the Trinity’ (page 273).

‘The freedom of the deified human being consists in being free-for, free-towards others, poised in the balance between self-possession and other-orientation. The free human being is free from fear, from compulsions and obsessions, from the need either to dominate or to be dominated, free from the cycle of violence, able to encourage the fulfilment of another’s happiness and, in the process, to achieve growth. The free human being is free for hospitality to the stranger, non violence towards the oppressor, and benevolent regard for every single creature that exists’ (page 290).

The Christian teaching concerning God as Trinity expresses an astonishing insight into the very being of God himself. We cannot expect to be able to grasp God's being with our tiny minds, but, thanks to Jesus, we are sure that God is not an almighty isolated being. We say that God is love. We know that when we experience love we long to be fully united with the one we love. With us, the union is always imperfect. There are always barriers to full communion. The God whom we experience as transcendent originating Source, as Word, and as Spirit is One through perfect communion in love.

Knowing that God is Spirit reminds us to be attentive to the divinely inspired movements of our own heart: movements of longing as we yearn for closer communion with God whose Spirit inspires us; movements of wonder and praise as we rejoice in God being with us. It reminds us to be sensitive to these movements in every man and every woman.

Knowing that God is Word reminds us to be attentive to the words and actions through which God speaks to us, and the words and actions through which we respond to God. We learn, too, to be attentive to each person's Word, as together we journey towards God who is the Source of everything that exists.

Knowing that God is Father/Mother reminds us to open our hearts to God's love and to treat every other person as our brother or sister.

4. Baptismal Consecration

When we are baptised Jesus shares with us his own baptismal experience of God. The same Spirit that came down upon Jesus comes down upon us, and God expresses his delight in us as he expressed his delight in Jesus: 'You are my son, the one I love; in you I take delight' (Luke 3:22).

Baptismal Consecration

The risen Jesus is sharing his divine communion with us:

‘I will take you to myself so that where I am you may be’ (John 14:3).

‘It is no longer I who live. It is Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, loving me and giving himself for me’ (Galatians 2:19-20).

Baptismal Consecration

‘You belong to him ... to bear fruit for God ... in the new life of the Spirit’ (Romans 7:4-6).

The Letter to the Hebrews speaks of the baptised as those who have been ‘enlightened’, have ‘tasted the heavenly gift’, have become ‘sharers of the Holy Spirit’, have ‘tasted the goodness of the word of God and the power of the age to come’ (Hebrews 6:4-6).

5. Priestly Consecration

While it is correct to define the ordained priesthood in terms of ministry (LG, n. 18; PO, n. 2), it is essential to remember that no ministry in the Church can be reduced to a way of relating among the members of the Christian community. All ministry, including that of the ordained priest, comes from Christ. It is a grace which flows from a special consecration to him. Who the ordained priest becomes through the consecration of ordination is the source of what he is able to do. It is because of who the ordained priest is graced to be by Christ that he is missioned to do what he does.

Priestly Consecration

‘Through the sacrament presbyters, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the head’ (PO, n.2).

Priestly Consecration

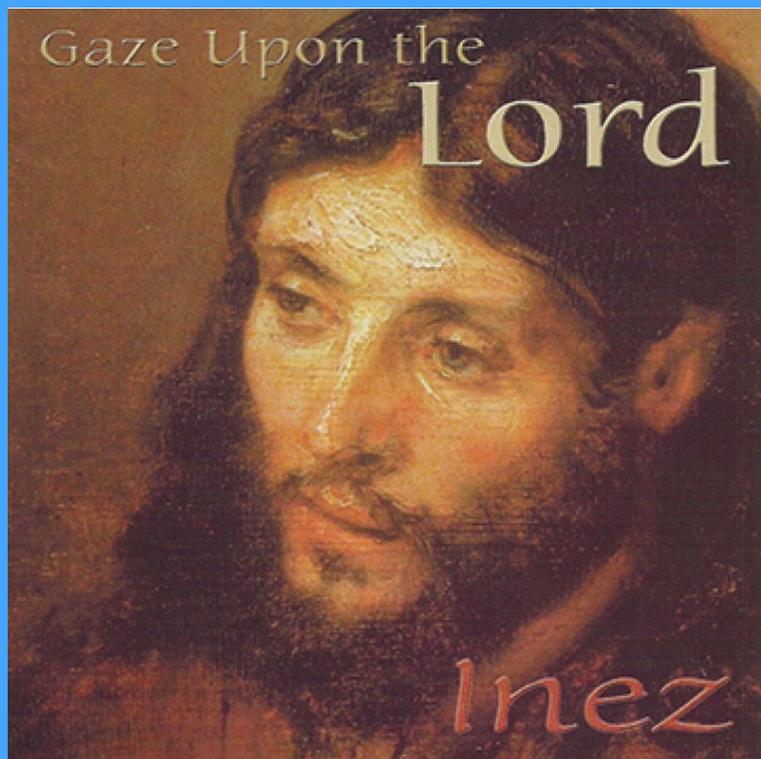
‘The priest, by virtue of the consecration which he receives in the sacrament of Orders, is sent forth by the Father in the mediatorship of Jesus Christ to whom he is configured in a special way as head and shepherd of his people, in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit, in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world’ (PDV, n.12).

Priestly Consecration

‘Priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the head and shepherd’ (PDV, n.15).

This special sacramental consecration to Christ is the ultimate source of the priest’s confidence:

‘No one should be discouraged, as we are doing God’s work. The God who calls us is the same God who sends us and who remains with us every day of our lives’ (PDV, n.4).



Gaze upon the Lord
Clare of Assisi

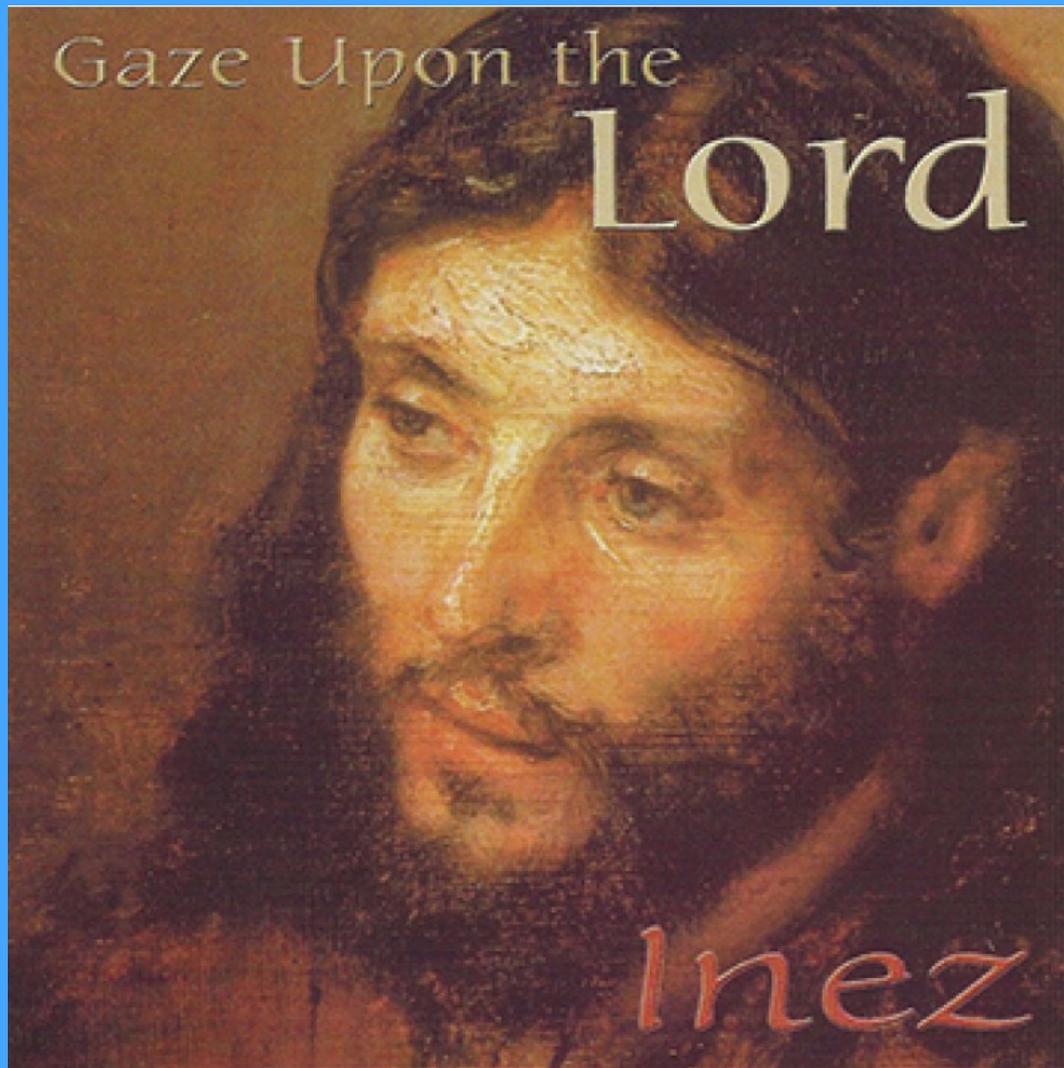
Woman's Song of God
Songs inspired by the writings
of Women Mystics

Briega O'Hare osc and Marie Cox rsm

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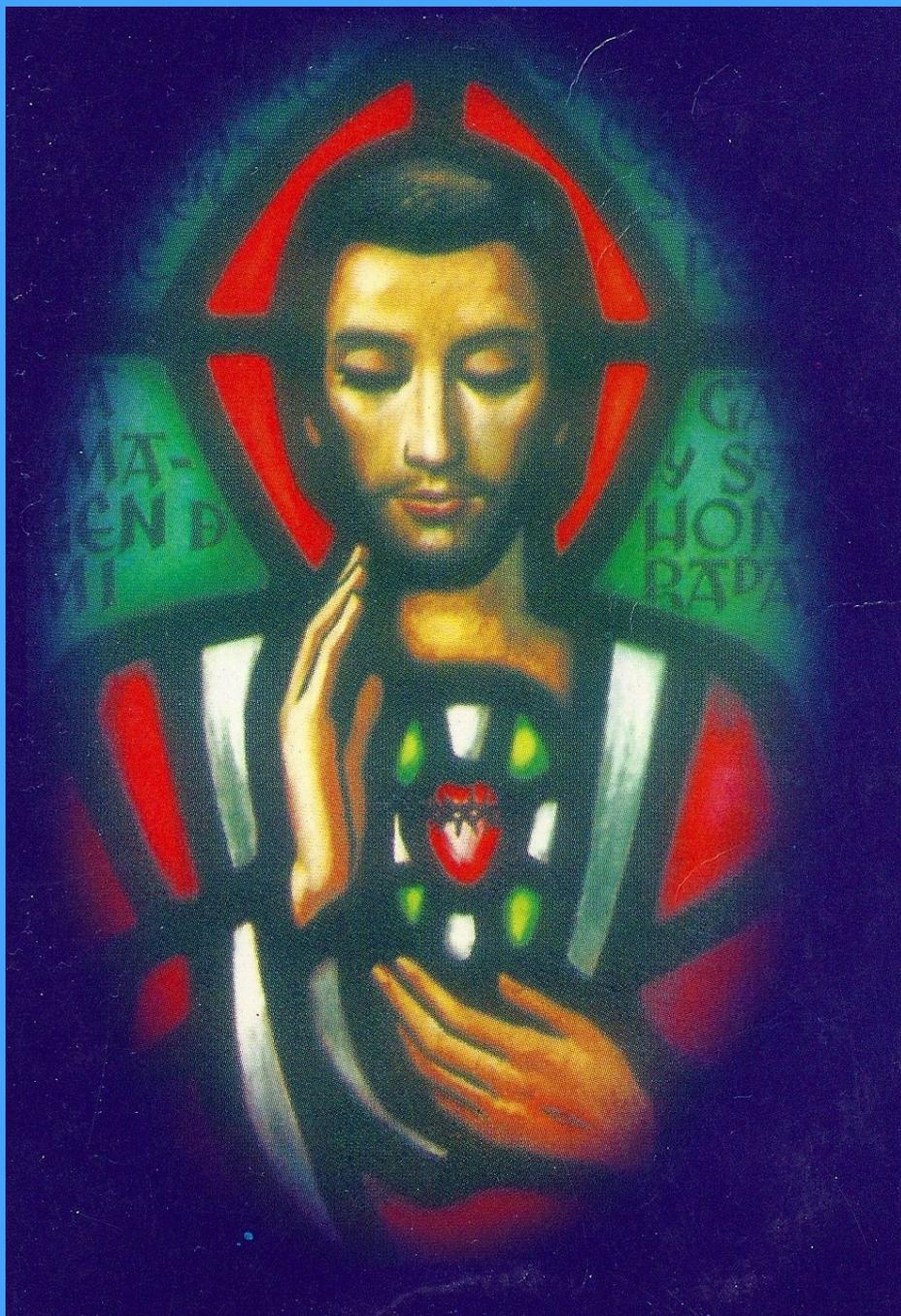
Available on itunes.

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Gaze upon the Lord.
Gaze upon his face.
Gaze upon the One
 who holds you in his embrace.

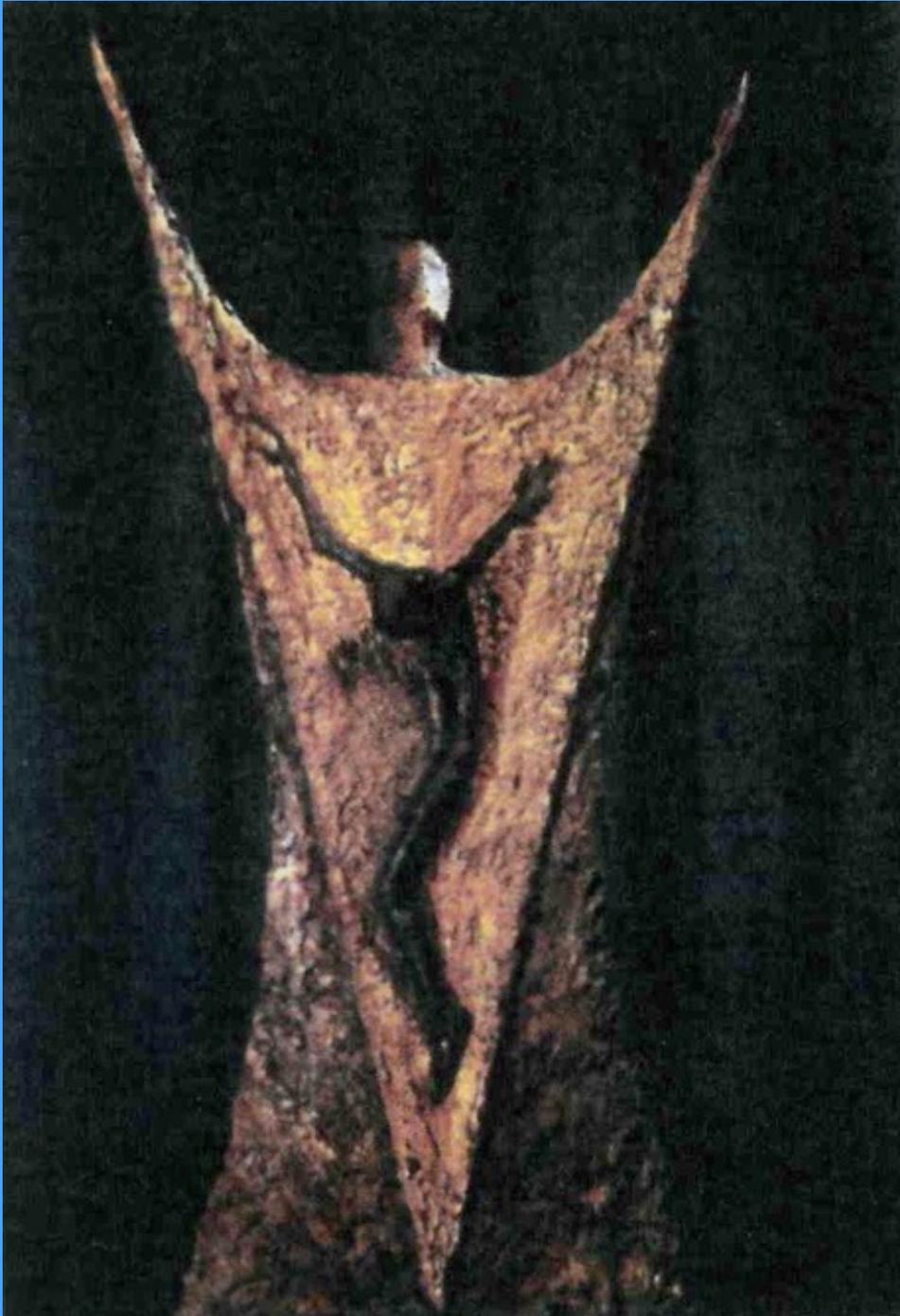
Gaze upon his life.
Gaze upon his love.
Gaze upon his coming forth
 from heaven above.



Look upon the Lord.
Look upon his way.
Look upon his heart.
It opens to each day.

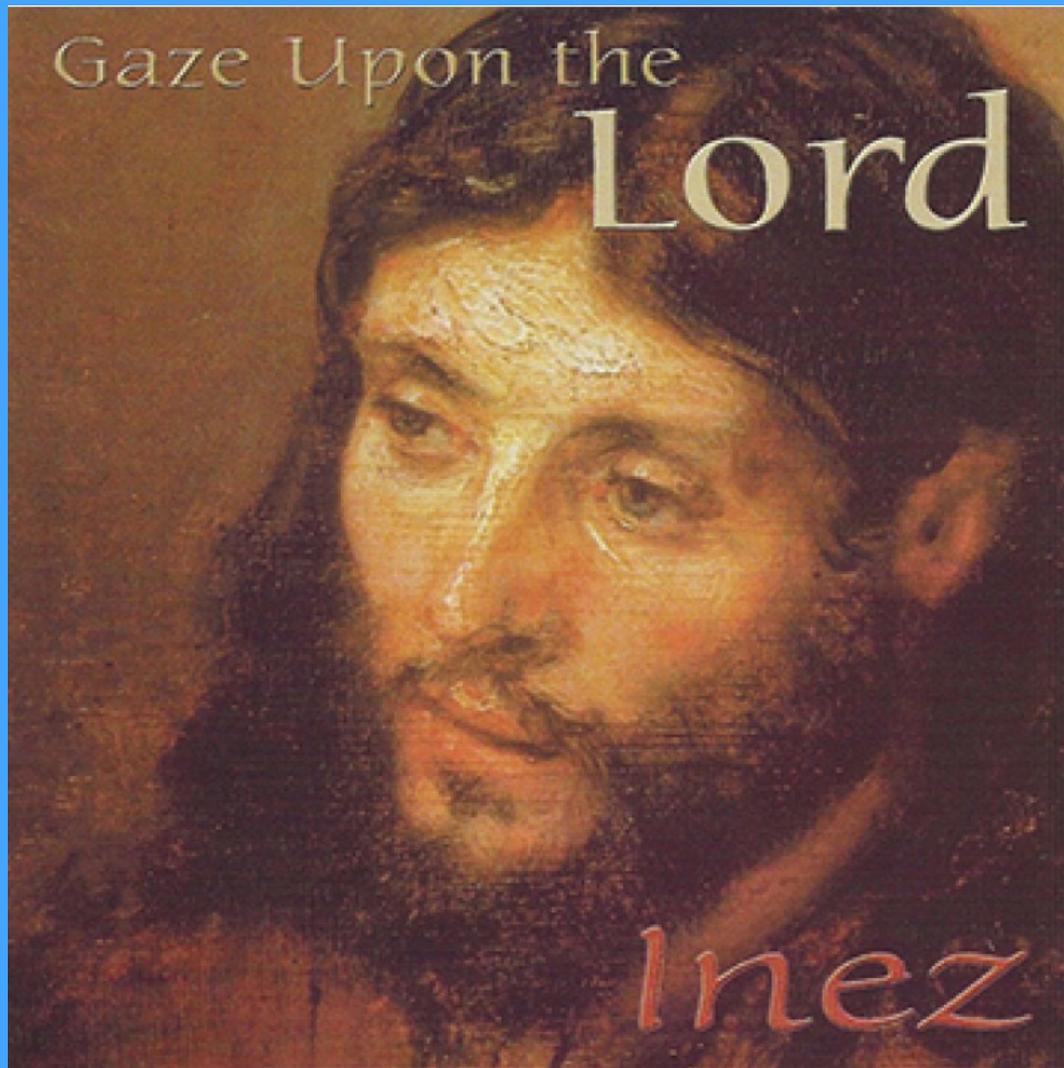


Though he was despised,
the lowest of all men,
look upon his sacred cross
which brings life again.



If you open to life's pain,
then with him you shall reign;
and allow your heart to hear,
then with him you'll rejoice.

Open to his cross
the wounds of each day's love.
Then you'll know the splendour
of his kingdom above.



Gaze upon his life.
Gaze upon his love.
Gaze upon his coming forth
from heaven above,
from heaven above.