

05. Open to healing grace



The task of turning around the processes of devastation that we humans have inflicted on our home is a daunting one. We are tempted to throw up our hands and wait for things to take their course.

What inspires us not to despair and do nothing is the fact that we are speaking not just of 'nature', but of 'creation'. We know-in-faith that God is constantly caring for our home and constantly inspiring us to wake up, to change our behaviour and to do something to stop the degradation for which we are responsible.

Pope Francis: Laudato Si'

'The urgent challenge to protect our common **home** includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common **home**. Here I want to recognise, encourage and thank all those striving in countless ways to guarantee the protection of the **home** which we share'(n. 13).

‘The Earth Charter (The Hague 29 June 2000) asked us to leave behind a period of self-destruction and make a new start, but we have not as yet developed a universal awareness needed to achieve this. Here, I would echo that courageous challenge: “As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning ... Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life”(n.207).

‘Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption. We need to take up an ancient lesson, found in different religious traditions and also in the Bible. It is the conviction that “less is more”. A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. To be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment’(n.222).

222 (continued)

‘Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack. This implies avoiding the dynamic of dominion and the mere accumulation of pleasures.’

The initiative is always with God.

Our part is to listen and to make space in our lives for God's healing grace, a space for God to fill.

This is what it means to let Christ live in us and act through us.

'From the beginning of the world, but particularly through the incarnation, the mystery of Christ is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole, without thereby impinging on its autonomy'(n.99).

‘From one source (God?) God made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us’(Acts 17:26-27).

The 'survival of the fittest = the survival of the selfless.

The selfish do not cohere

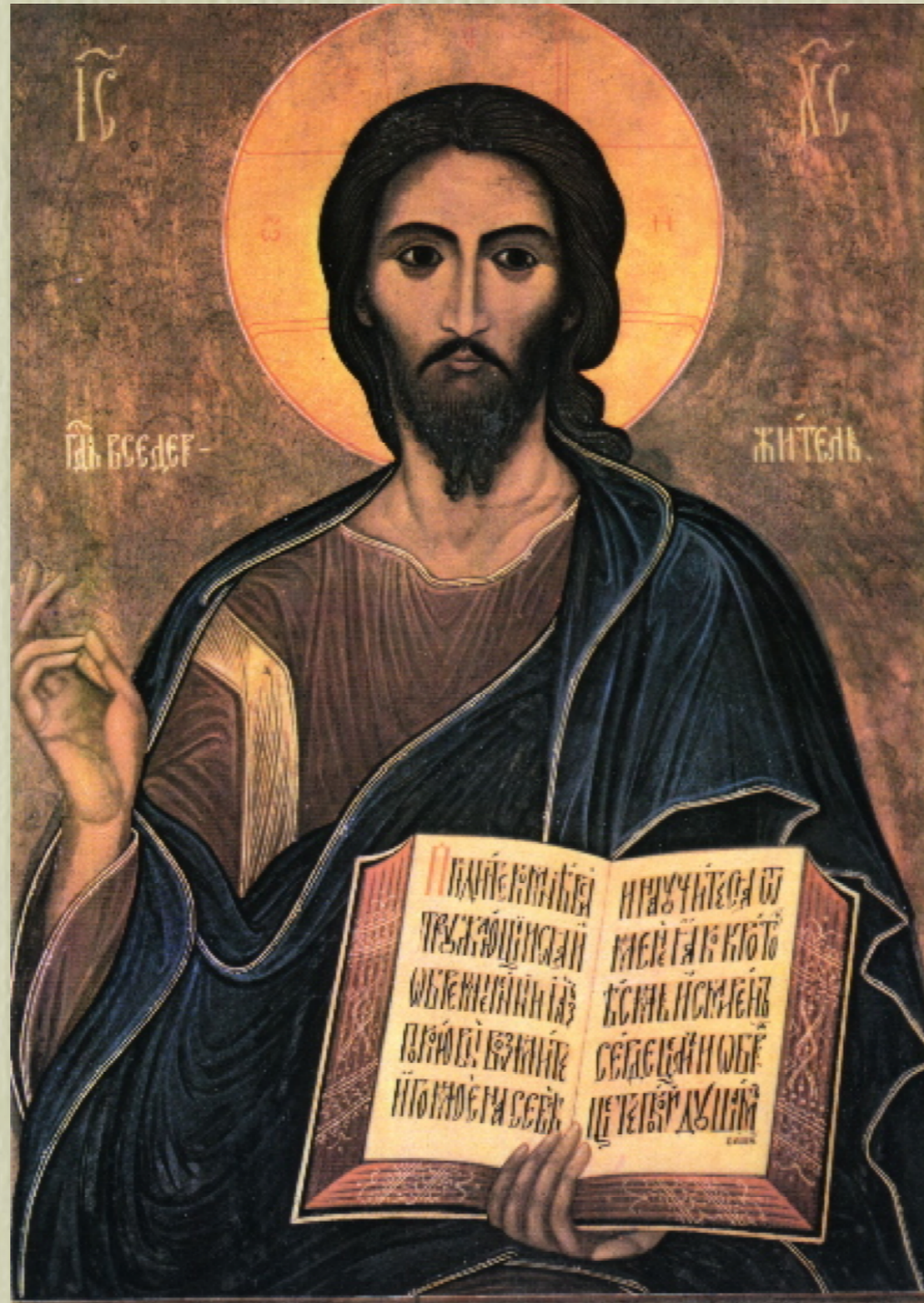
Einstein: 'Science without religion is blind; religion without science is lame' ("Science and Religion" in Science, Philosophy and Religion: A Symposium (NY. Conference 1941 page 211).

'Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish.'
(John-Paul II letter to the director of the Vatican observatory).

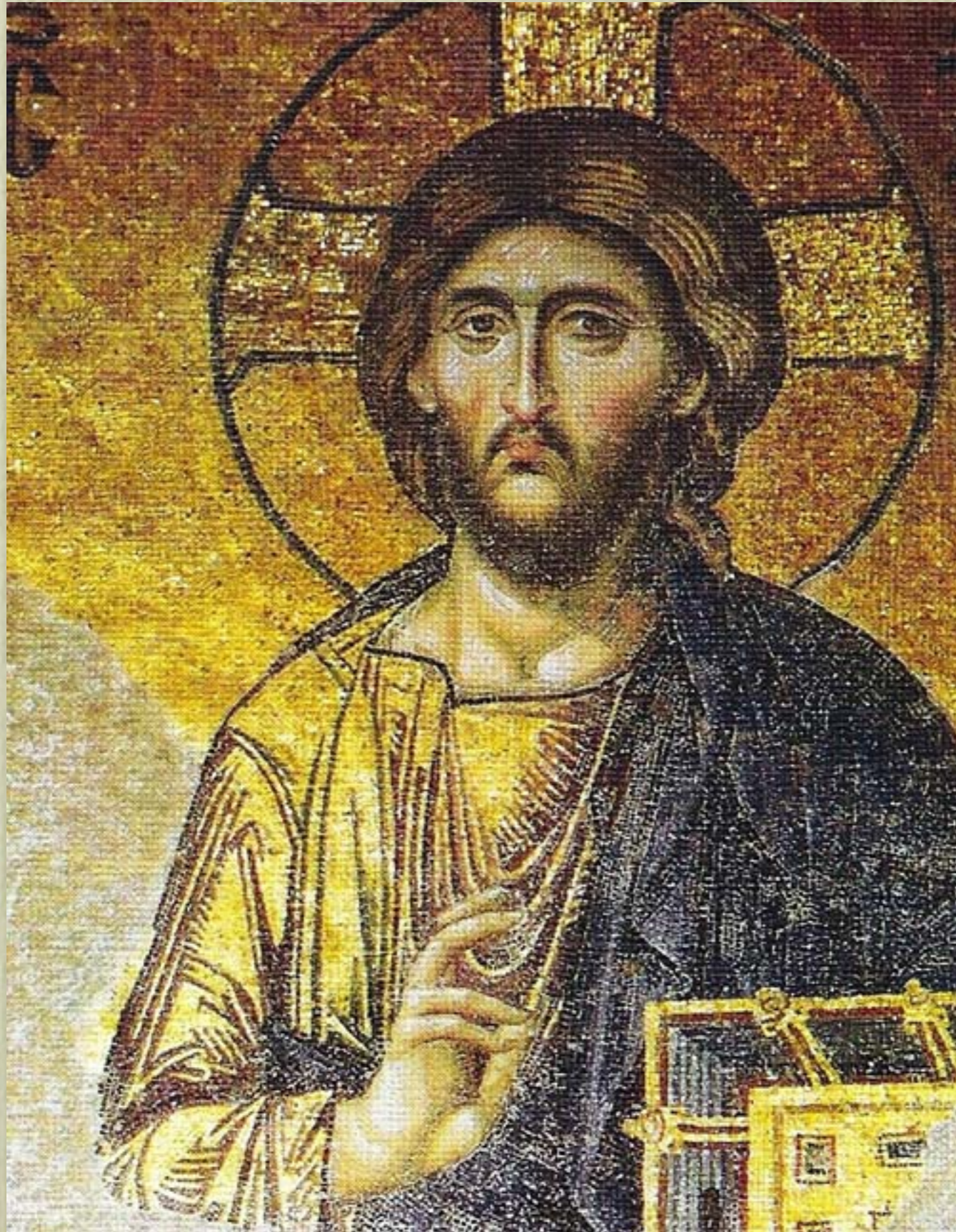
'Neither in its impetus nor its achievements can science go to its limits without being tinged with mysticism and charged with faith'(Teilhard The Phenomenon of Man 1976 page 248).

‘The New Testament does not only tell us of the earthly Jesus and his tangible and loving relationship with the world. It also shows him risen and glorious, present throughout creation by his universal Lordship: “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:19-20). This leads us to direct our gaze to the end of time, when the Son will deliver all things to the Father, so that “God may be everything to every one” (1Corinthians 15:28). Thus, the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence’(n.100).

In communion with God through communion with Jesus



Matthew 11:28-29



The Word became flesh
and lived among us



‘We have seen his glory,
the glory as of a father’s only son,
full of the gift of truth’(John 1:14).

‘On the cross, the heart of
Jesus became a massive space
for the fire of the Spirit to
burn – free to blaze out,
“more intense than all the
fires in the world”(Flame 2.2),
in resurrection’(Iain Matthew,
The Impact of God, 131).

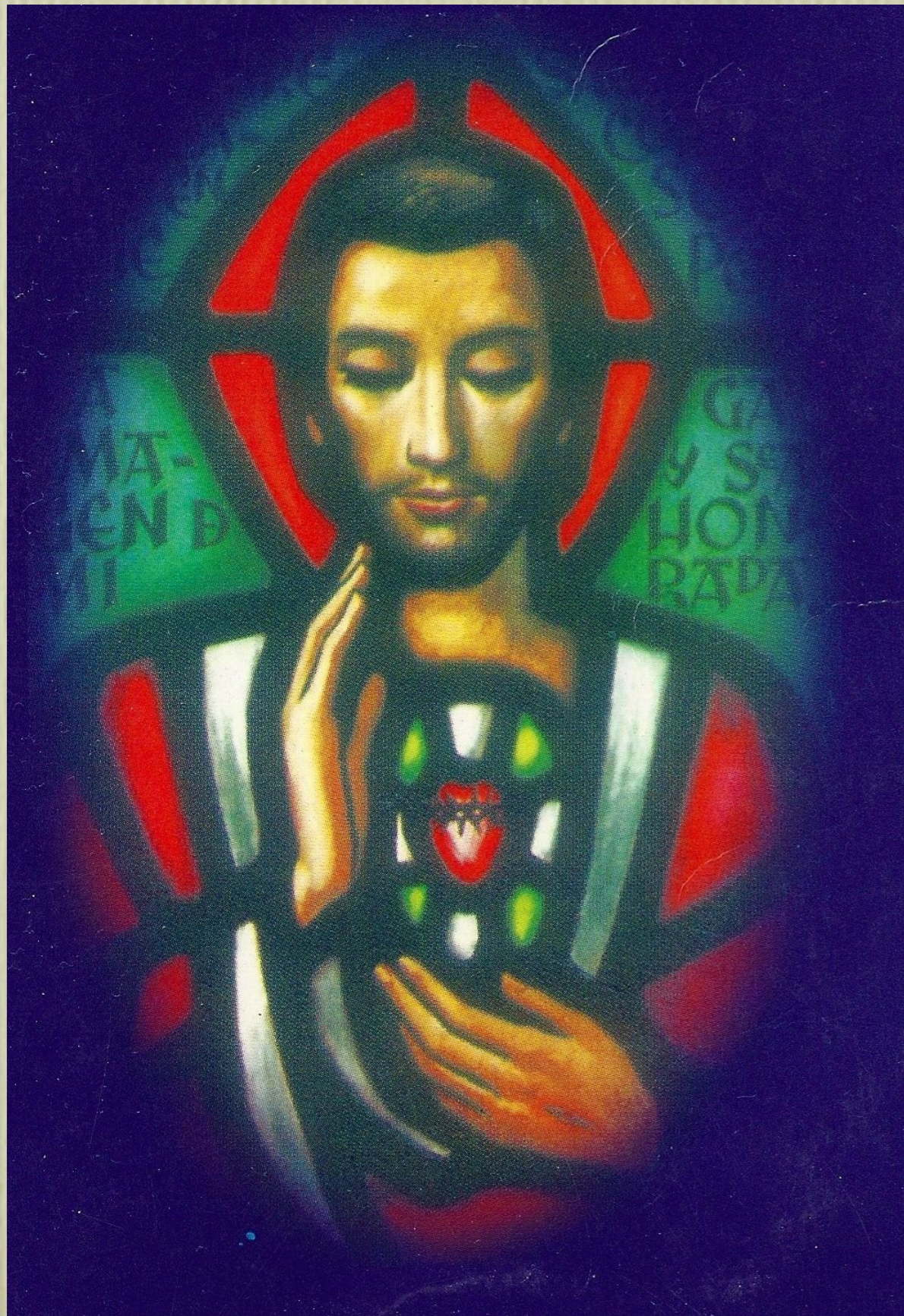


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‘From his fullness
we have all received,
grace upon grace.’

‘God’s love has been
poured into our hearts by
the Holy Spirit who has
been given to us.’
(Romans 5:5)



‘The heart of God descends
in haste to his creation,
with the weight of an infinite love,
and the heart of creation rises
towards God,
drawn by an attraction
that dominates all others in it.

It is in Jesus
that these two hearts meet,
and they unite so profoundly
that the two hearts become one.’

(Jules Chevalier, ‘The Heart of Jesus’, page 76).

‘I live, no longer I. It is Christ who lives in me’(Galatians 2:20).

‘All of us, with unveiled faces,
seeing the glory of the Lord
as though reflected in a mirror,
are being transformed into the same image
from one degree of glory to another;
for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit’(2Corinthians 3:18).

‘Believing, hoping, loving are the only means for union with a transcendent God’(Iain Matthew *The Impact of God*, page 98)

‘Believe, trust, love, and you are receiving the gift. These form the meeting place; they *are* the encounter’(page 94).

‘God is close. Our response has to be at root a receiving, and that receiving cannot but put us in contact with God... Believe, hope, love, and you are receiving God’(page 101).

‘Where God is a God who reveals and gives, to believe and to love is to encounter God’(page 102).

‘Faith, hope, love translate commitment – above all God’s to us’(page 103).

Faith

‘It is no longer I who live. It is Christ who lives in me. And the life I am now living in the flesh, I live because of the faith of Jesus Christ, loving me and giving himself to me’(Galatians 2:20).

‘Faith is the theological gift, which lifts a person into God’s own life. It comes from God and leads to God ... By faith we know with the Son’s knowing’(Iain Matthew page 101).

‘In faith the Spirit communicates, not words, but personally, the Word’(page 103).

Hope

John knows only two realities: the present, and eternity.

Hope pulls memory off the suction pads of yesterday and tomorrow, and cups it upwards in the present.

The “sacrament of the present moment” it is called.

Eternity is bearing down, like an inverted triangle, upon one point in time only: now.

Worry is not just a pain; it is a tragedy, because it absorbs in something less what is meant for something greater.

Hope means easing the mind of what inflames it or frightens it, and cupping it upwards to the God who alone can fill it (Iain Matthew page 107).’

Iain Matthew p. 107 continued

‘When John speaks of the mother of Jesus, it is in this connection. She moved freely, refusing to let herself be paralysed by past or future. In her mountain climb, she renounced the need for pre-planned handholds, opting instead to surrender to the guidance, the hand, of Another. Her hope set her free to be possessed fully in each present moment by the Holy Spirit.

As with faith, so with hope, John can emphasise a letting-go, in this case of past and future, only because he is convinced that God is hovering, pressing, to come in and fill the gap.’

Love

‘Love is God’s gift by which we choose God and want what God wants. The Spirit of God is loving us and putting us in the current of love between the Son and the Father. We love with the Spirit’s loving’(page 101).

‘John defines love as aligning our will perfectly to God’s.
But in practice that means not aligning it to anything else’(page 99).

This has the benefit of our not being dependent on anything less than God

‘Love heals history, where the Spirit has power to turn every wound, even the wounds of sin, into “wounds of love”(page 109).

‘Love is God’s activity: “our” love is like a kite, hanging in the wind of God’s love for us. This activity of God is called the Holy Spirit.’

‘The Holy Spirit is the Flame, the principal agent, the principal Lover. Love is first God’s gift of God’s Self ... Our love is the offspring of this outpouring : Love is our Spirit-given “Yes” to an inpouring God.’

‘Give me an experience of God.’ Turn to God present within you, and love God. You may not feel God’s presence, but want God, value God. give yourself to God, say yes to God, adore God. Love God and you are experiencing God.’

‘The “Yes” of love centres me, unites me to God who is my centre.’

‘Love creates likeness like fire turning everything to fire.’

‘You looked with love upon me
and deep within your eyes imprinted grace;
this mercy set me free,
held in your love’s embrace,
to lift my eyes adoring to your face’ (SC Stanza 32).

‘That is John’s vision: a God, constantly gazing at the universe,
personally meeting the eyes of each person in the universe,
with a look that “cleanses, makes beautiful, enriches and enlightens”.
God’s love is creative: it elicits and forms –
“taking you and placing you in God’s Self, making you like God”.
Our love is a Yes to that.’

‘A little of this pure love is more precious to God, more precious for us, and of more benefit to the Church, even though it seems to be doing nothing, than all other words put together ... Since (in the Song of Songs) God adjures them not to wake the bride from this love, who would dare to do so and escape reprimand? It is for this goal of love that we were created’(SC 29.2-3; quoted page 113).

‘Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also “macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones”. That is why the Church set before the world the ideal of a “civilization of love”. Social love is the key to authentic development’(n.231).

n. 231 (continued)

“In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life – political, economic and cultural – must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity”. In this framework, along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a “culture of care” which permeates all of society. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us.’

‘It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation. Grace, which tends to manifest itself tangibly, found unsurpassable expression when God himself became man and gave himself as food for his creatures. The Lord, in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. He comes not from above, but from within, he comes that we might find him in this world of ours. In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Indeed the Eucharist is itself an act of cosmic love: “Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world”(n.236).

n. 236 (continued) ‘The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God’s hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, “creation is projected towards divinization, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself”. Thus, the Eucharist is also a source of light and motivation for our concerns for the environment, directing us to be stewards of all creation.’



‘No one can cultivate a sober and satisfying life without being at peace with him or herself. An adequate understanding of spirituality consists in filling out what we mean by peace, which is much more than the absence of war. Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life. Nature is filled with words of love, but how can we listen to them amid constant noise, interminable and nerve-wracking distractions, or the cult of appearances?’(n.225).

n. 225 (continued)

‘Many people today sense a profound imbalance which drives them to frenetic activity and makes them feel busy, in a constant hurry which in turn leads them to ride rough-shod over everything around them. This too affects how they treat the environment. An integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence “must not be contrived but found, uncovered”.

Sabbath Rest

‘On Sunday, our participation in the Eucharist has special importance. Sunday, like the Jewish Sabbath, is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world. Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, the “first day” of the new creation, whose first fruits are the Lord’s risen humanity, the pledge of the final transfiguration of all created reality. It also proclaims “man’s eternal rest in God”. In this way, Christian spirituality incorporates the value of relaxation and festivity. We tend to demean contemplative rest as something unproductive and unnecessary, but this is to do away with the very thing which is most important about work: its meaning. We are called to include in our work a dimension of receptivity and gratuity, which is quite different from mere inactivity’(n.237).

n. 237 (continued)

‘Rather, it is another way of working, which forms part of our very essence. It protects human action from becoming empty activism; it also prevents that unfettered greed and sense of isolation which make us seek personal gain to the detriment of all else. The law of weekly rest forbade work on the seventh day, “so that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your maidservant, and the stranger, may be refreshed” (*Exodus* 23:12). Rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others. And so the day of rest, centred on the Eucharist, sheds its light on the whole week, and motivates us to greater concern for nature and the poor.’



Only in God

words and music John Foley
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Only in God will
my soul be at rest,
from Him comes
my hope, my salvation.

He alone is
my rock of safety,
my strength,
my glory, my God.



Trust in Him
at all times, O people,
and pour out
your heart.

God Himself
is a refuge for us
and a stronghold
for our fears.



Only in God will
my soul be at rest,
from Him comes
my hope, my salvation.

He alone is
my rock of safety,
my strength,
my glory, my God.



Many times have I
heard him tell
of his long-lasting love.

You yourself, Lord,
for all those who labour
for love of your name.



Only in God will
my soul be at rest,
from Him comes
my hope, my salvation.

He alone is
my rock of safety,
my strength,
my glory, my God.