

Explorations in Sacred Heart Spirituality Beauty and Holiness

The question of Luke 24:32 is well known “Were not our hearts burning within us?” To whom is the question addressed? Surely the reader, even at a distance of 2000 years. He or she is expected to answer and indeed from the heart. This meeting of the evangelist and the reader takes place within the relationship of the disciples of Emmaus with the Risen Lord. To retrace the enthusiasm of the disciples is to go back to the word “homilize” for the disciples were having a conversation into which the Risen Lord inserts himself. Jesus joins the dialogue of salvation and opens up the Scriptures (Moses and the prophets v.27) which referred to him. Luke’s further reference to the conversation includes mention of the psalms (v.44). The closing detail of the information shared with Jesus was: “but him the women did not see,” v.24. After the sharing of Jesus, the eyes of the sojourners are opened and they recognized him in the breaking of bread.

The exchange is characterized by clarity, proportion and wholeness. To the clarity which comes with opening the eyes, there is the (dis)proportion between the unknowing, hardened heart (v.25) and the burning heart (v.32). There is also the wholeness of the biblical witness (v.44). The reader will have read the text well were he or she to exclaim: “oh how beautiful!”

The evaluation that something is beautiful is the message that the heart, on the discovery of harmony, sends to the brain, leading to clarity and a satisfying fullness. The heart is the discerner of what is beautiful. But a heart is only a heart to the extent of communion with another. This exchange of hearts about what is valued as beauty is what devotion to the Sacred Heart (DSH) is all about. Hearts tell each other what is beautiful. Jesus in his heart tells us what is beautiful in God’s relationship with us. This is a message that only the heart can see and only a heart can hear. Blessed John Newman spoke of a heart to heart conversation, *heart speaks to heart!*

Using the symbol of the heart to signify the person on the inside is near widespread. Some call it a primordial image. A nice way to reflect on the meaning of heart is never to separate it from the whole body. Through his or her body a person

receives an action from another body and likewise acts upon another. If the eye is the whole body seeing, and the ear is the whole body hearing, then the heart is the whole body in relationship with another: heart of love, heart of stone, heart of indifference. Heart is a sign of the core of the person in relationship.

So to discover another person is to discover their heart. One speaks of the palpitations of the heart when one discovers love, support, compassion. Sometimes we are asked to break good and bad news carefully to avoid a heart attack. No wonder that over time heart came to symbolize interiority and especially the value of an experience of love, worth, appreciation or to disvalue hatred and rejection. A heart broken is often itself a heart discovered.

One intuitively a situation as beautiful or ugly, the one to be sustained in goodness and truth and the other, the ugly to be eliminated, or the ugly can be integrated and therefore harmonized. The heart which sends the evaluation of an experience as beautiful or ugly is the agent in the making of symbols. From the heart tumbles out the parallels, the analogies, the metaphors, the more, the sublime. The word “symbol” comes from the Greek word meaning to “throw together.” In the symbolizing process the heart often throws together disparate things, even very disparate, to arrive at an evaluation of harmony. The person as heart intuitively forms, relates form to form, a particular shape in a particular situation. The early Christian hymn cited by Paul in Philippians 2:5-11 is a good example. Jesus came in the form of a slave at once horrendously disproportionate to who he is and yet off the page in terms of sheer beauty. “This doesn’t make sense!” But the heart evaluation of Jesus’ self donation is beautiful.

We claim the role of the heart in making a symbol. Symbol is defined as a sign of experienced participation. Are we not, as human, symbol makers? We see how heart which shares in the symbol making process is itself made a metaphor for the whole person in relationship. The two references to Mary as pondering in her heart the events of Jesus’ birth are said to be “Mary symbolizing.” “Son, give me your heart,” is how Proverbs appeals to a youth to be a symbol maker of wisdom (23:26). But besides heart as symbol maker and symbolized, we cannot deny a particular significance to the physical heart, what we call “the heart of circulation,” ever since the research of William Harvey in the 1600’s. Today the word “circulation” points to the heart as pump and is

appreciated as central to all bodily function. But the circulation of one is related to the circulation within another living being. Extending this, it is not difficult to see heart to heart as circulation to circulation within a major framework of cosmic circulation.

Matthew, perhaps in seeing parallels between Jesus and Moses, presents (ten) stories of healings in chapter 8-9. Jesus was preaching the Gospel and healing all sorts of ailments. After each group he offers a comment and in 9:36 he writes: “at the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd.” Although the Greek word is not “heart,” rather “guts,” it is still well translated heart for it indicates both a body of compassion and circulation. Pius XII in *Haurietis Aquas*, the encyclical in 1956 on DSH, devoted some energy to presenting the physical heart of Jesus as worthy of worship. If the heart is the whole person literally and physically enabled to circulate, then attention to the heart is attention to Jesus’ whole embodied person. The attention is the whole person but the focus is on his heart not only for its symbolic possibilities but also because his down to earth humanness is the medium of God’s saving and cosmic presence with us in creation. There were efforts in the history of Christian spirituality to get around the body, in order to advance an emphasis on the Lord of Glory. This tendency is confronted with Jesus’ historical heart of circulation. This remains a stumbling block for some, un-reflected upon by others, but for the Christian, imbued with DSH a constant and convincing witness to God with us. All we need to express about the humanity of Jesus comes down to recognizing that he, like us, had a heart.

Our bodliness remains our stake in the cosmic dance of creation; without a body we are nobody. Being a body we are by that fact somebody. So too is Jesus. He is somebody and through his body he relates. Had he not been a body, we would not be saved; we would lose our footing in the wider and exhilarating unfolding of creation. Many believe that even without need of a redeemer, Jesus would still have been born an embodied person for he is always envisioned as the first born of the new creation. If in DSH we turn more readily today than in the past to the heart of the risen Lord and his pierced side, we never forget that that heart is the heart of the itinerant preacher, the heart of the physical body of Jesus of Nazareth, born from the womb and blood of Mary. Although writing in the light of the Easter faith, Mark the evangelist in the plot of his

gospel, held off all worship of Christ as Risen Lord until he had firmly established the story of the ministry, suffering and death of Jesus. The exquisite harmony leading to an evaluation of the wordless beauty of a crucified Messiah would be jettisoned if the early community were woolly as to Jesus' true heart! Mark doesn't need to use the word heart for the reader to know that Jesus had a heart; how often does the reader correctly discern that not only was Jesus human, that his body was in circulation and his heart felt every emotion. For Mark one emotion was bewilderment. In the boat scene which closes the double cycle of feeding stories Jesus asks if the disciples have understood what the feeding was all about. The pathos is palpable in 8:21: "and he said to them: do you still not understand?" The issue was indeed heart to heart for earlier we are told 8:17: "he said ...you have hardened your heart," an echo of Mark 4:12. DSH functions as a way for the reader to enter the story and read every exchange in term of "heart speaks to heart." There is no need to constantly mention the word "heart" for the matter as in all literature is imagination.

To connect heart and imagination leads us back to the interface of harmony and beauty. The ancient philosophers said that there is nothing in the mind without being in the senses. That we know when we attend to the senses: touch, smell, see, hear and taste. Some modern philosophers suggest that on the way to the brain, the senses check in with the heart. From there emerges an evaluation of what is (dis)harmonious in the experience of the senses. On the one side Thomas Aquinas says beauty is "what is seen, pleases;" on the other side, Jonathan Edwards notes that beauty is "Being's cordial consent to being." If Thomas is focused on the senses, Edwards' view goes beyond to delve into the heart. I note particularly his use of the word "cordial," meaning from the heart. Edwards was writing in New England in the mid 1700's. He was arguing with his Calvinist brothers and sisters for more heart in the discernment of God's gifts. He boldly used the word "affections" in the title of his essay.

As noted above, harmony addresses clarity, proportionality and wholeness of the sensed phenomena. The heart discerns beauty or lack thereof. Enormous efforts are made to know deeply this evaluative process. One could fill many pages with references to the subjective character of such an appraisal. "Everyone to his own taste," is a common refrain to the question "where is the beauty in this?" If the ancients are said to have

stressed the objective standard of what is deemed beautiful, the moderns are said to stress the subjective. If the heart is the discerner then the role of heart in the evaluative process is under deep scrutiny. Here many factors enter in. Not the least is culture. Then the discussion is one of intercultural evaluations of world, life, and meaning. These remarks show the depth of the discussion of what is beauty and more deeply what is harmony if the heart is the diviner of harmony. Aesthetics is the study of beauty which itself is the attainment of art. Or, perhaps better said, the manifestation of harmony is the fruit of art. The artist senses the beauty to be revealed in a given situation, often in a harmonization of what seems to be contraries. Urs von Balthazar discusses the revelation to the artist of aesthetic potential. Michelangelo, it is said, saw the Pietà in its original marble setting. What was needed was the removal of marble to allow the figure to appear. Maybe Edwards' definition of beauty applies here: "being's cordial consent to being." Marvel too at the artistry of a teacher who sees the potential to be released in the life of a young student. This "insight" according to Balthazar demands great humility. A Franciscan scholar, Sr. Ilia Delio has written beautifully of the humility of God in face of God's own creation. This reflection leads us to appreciate in so many ways the meek and humble heart of Jesus.

Relative to DSH, the consent is indeed cordial, that is of the heart. Pascal said that the heart has reasons which only the heart knows. In bringing heart and imagination together in the dialogue or conversation of salvation, we broach a way of gazing with Jesus. DSH is not about Jesus in the sense when we say that "that person is all about himself." Jesus is ever clear in pointing away from himself to the Father and to his neighbor. In DSH, the heart of the artist/disciple is attuned to form and the potential for harmonization. This pushes DSH into the realm of the mystic and there the devotion rightly belongs as the history of Christian spirituality shows. Karl Rahner who wrote with great insight on the heart of Christ, is often quoted as saying that the only option for the Christian of the future is to be a mystic.

The mystic gazes with Jesus in the Spirit. Lovers do not only look into each others' eyes but share a common vision of the world, its beauty and its ugliness. What an exciting harmony for Jesus and his disciples to share a vision! At times the harmony is clearly of things that do not fit their expectations. Tradesmen were abandoning their trade

and erstwhile sick people were braving the dusty back roads of Palestine. Influential members of the Sanhedrin were coming at night to see Jesus. The harmony is a) between Jesus and the disciples and b) in what Jesus is showing the disciples or c) what the disciple are causing Jesus to see for the first time. In Jesus' pastoral seminar (Luke 10:17-20), the disciple rejoices that evil spirits submitted at his preaching, Jesus rejoices that the disciple's name is written in heaven. So much of the praise and thanksgiving in Luke's gospel relates to this harmony within a harmony: the resuscitation of an only son of a widowed mother (Luke 7), the gratitude of a leper who is a Samaritan (Luke 17). There is no way to measure the mystical depths of the exchange between Mary and Elizabeth nor the harmony within disharmony of Jesus' cross companions. There is the gazing with and the gazing "alongside of Jesus" as Jesus turns in Luke 9:51 to go to Jerusalem and through Jerusalem to Rome. Ah there is the life of the Christian community within the life of Jesus, now raised in glory and sending the promise of the Father, the Spirit. The innocence of Jesus overwhelmingly established in his trial extends and permeates the community as it brings the good news to the whole world.

The harmony is often not seen immediately. Only after a struggle with dissonance does the harmony appear. "After a struggle" is both synchronic (now) and diachronic (throughout time). The homily or conversation of salvation in the present has both a memory and a hope. The Canticle of Zechariah is mystified with these harmonies as it celebrates the Baptist's vocation within the vocation of his surprised parents: birth, intergenerational fulfillment and the ever widening road of peace! All of this is too much for the heart... only long and loving contemplation in imitation of Mary's pondering can put form on these experiences and make of them symbols of God's uncontrollable love for humankind. Mary is said to symbolize the experiences of the angelic announcement and the shepherd's proclamation. Thus she put form on the experience and so entered the experience with her heart. She saw the harmony and praised God for the beauty. Not only are God's fulfillments beautiful but the form of the fulfillment is outstanding: virgin conception and a birth from a sterile womb. This contrary to human expectation that comes off every page of the Bible, a harmony, disharmony and new harmony comes to undisguised glee in the Mary's Canticle, the *Magnificat*, companion to Zechariah's.

God's harmonies are open to surprise, novelty and delight. The heart of the mystic is fascinated by the presence of God to this world and the shining quality of this world in God's eyes. Mysticism is therefore not a flight from this world but an embrace of the God immanent to our human and cosmic experience. That is what makes mysticism so modern. We are only awakening to the immanence of God in the whole of creation and modern science invites us to such contemplation. For the mystically heart-ed person, the beauty of this world is not slap stick, not a take it or leave it, an indifference. It is a passionate embrace. Every embrace unfolds a mystery which must then yield to another fold. The experience is that we have only touched the hem of the garment. With at least 15 billion years in the coming, who would claim to know more than a thread? The mystic trusts the more to which his or her experience points. The mystic in Christ has come to entrust himself or herself to the excess, the sublime, the more, the surplus which is glimpsed in the experience of the Risen Lord. That experience of the Risen Lord maybe blinding as it was for Paul. Or it may be the quiet assurance that no matter how things go, one will cope.

That too was Paul's experience, the experience of the little hopes fulfilled on the way to the celebration of the big hope, to paraphrase the thought of Benedict XVI (*Spe Salvi Sumus*). There are highs and lows in the mystic's experience. The gift of being a mystic is tested at the bar of endurance, a sure sign to us of the presence of the Risen Lord (see Hebrews 12:1-3). As noted, harmony, disharmony and new harmony is the rule of the mystic... how well did the confessional heart of Augustine cry out: "oh Beauty!"

Beauty is the focus of art, holiness is the concern of religion. Both are concerned with the more of life. So, inevitably, the story of one crosses into the story of the other. The locus of their confluence is the heart. If not fed by both, the heart is unbalanced and the illness sets into the human person. Art begs holiness as religion begs beauty. Human development demands the flourishing of both beauty and holiness, art and religion. The word "flourish" is advisedly used. We humans either flourish or atrophy. In fact, we need to flourish in order to atrophy with élan. The will to power is properly a will to be gifted with life for ever, not a livelihood (*bios*) that is ephemeral but life (*zoe*) that is eternal. Here holiness is end, *telos*, perfection, access to ultimate presence, not everlastingly but eternally. Everlasting is holding on to the starting point and postponing the end; eternal is

without starting point or ending. “Our hearts are made for you O Lord and shall not rest until they rest in you.” That rest is celebrated in the Letter to the Hebrews in what seems to be only a homiletic aside (3:7-4:13). No, this rest is not inactivity. This rest is dynamic and unceasing participation in the community of God's praises, in the presence to which God's action in Christ gives access. This harmony the author calls “perfection.” We might translate it perfect-ed-ness, made holy. Because the experience of the beautiful is a call, a summons, a thirst for holiness, for the Other, the experience is one of striving, not possession, of becoming, not being unless we return to beauty as “being's cordial consent to being.” Beauty is the heart's consent to holiness. Holiness is the heart's consent to beauty.

Only on the strings of the heart does this music play out in the dance between beauty and holiness. There in the improvisation that is music, the beauty of holiness is summoning the holiness of beauty. The theist acknowledges the thrall of the holy, the Christian is beholden to the glory of God shining on the face of Jesus, revealer of his heart. Every human life is both holding and losing one's ground on the moving surface of beauty in the irresistible call of the holy. Who can ever stand on a wave or on a moonbeam, be unresponsive to the stardust from which our bodliness emerged? This is the adventure of the heart no matter how beauty and holiness be named at any particular moment. Both beauty and holiness come in well wrapped packages. They have innumerable cultural strings attached even to the point where the darkness is the light and the sickness is the health. Finding one's heart, the true self, is no easy task. The heart is the staging to work out this “upward call of God in Christ,” to use Christian terms (Phil 3:14).

Humans have always known the ways of the heart; in modern times we have named that knowledge a science. Incalculable is how much spirituality is helped out by psychology be it professional or homespun, akin to the wisdom of the Bible. If we live with more complexity in today's world, we are not without equipment for the journey. We may not in fact be living with more complexity but we may be more aware of the complexity with which we live. We have to be accountable. Yes, the help may be more sophisticated, the quest is the same. From the timing of the Big Bang we are still outward bound and there is no returning home. The focus is the future, finding nature to be

promise and delight, challenge and vocation. We need eternally to heed the call of the beautiful. All are called to holiness through the medium of beauty enabled on the journey by the developments in the sciences. Vatican II still reads like a breath of fresh air. The image breakers betray art and struggle to know beauty. Those who divide into a dualism what God the Future of all put together are playing to an old worn out tune. They want to break the tension, dissolve the dialectic, take their marbles and go home. The heart attuned to beauty and holiness stays in the game.

DSH grew up within the Christian community as a way to keep us focused on the person of Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God. There is a parallel between the language of Pius XII about the central nature of the devotion and the language of Vatican II on the centrality of the Liturgy. Both give pivotal importance to their respective concern. Instantly one may object that a devotion cannot be on the same shelf as the Liturgy of the community. In reference to the Divine Liturgy, the words of Pius and Vatican II seem trite, in reference to a devotion, they seem over the top. But that is the salient point about DSH which is so centered on the person of Jesus that it has a claim on many Christians for no one who believes in Jesus can be without devotion to him.

So some form of devotion, big “D,” DSH for example, is but an attempt to name what has to be part of each Christian's life. Unless we divorce spirituality from theology, then an intimate relationship with Jesus as founder, and more than founder, is critical. One time theology divorced from pastoral experience was decried; now theology estranged from spirituality is the new misfit. Once it was said that all good spirituality flows from theology; now it is clear that all good theology flows from spirituality. Nothing helps to remake the devotional connections more than reflection on the interface between holiness and beauty. The challenge is to see how devotion is functioning as out rigging, protector of the central affirmations of faith. A sclerosis of creedal formulation begs the heart's circulation. The whole creed comes to expression in devotion's call of beauty to holiness and of holiness to beauty. How to digest the creed and make it one's own is the challenge. Devotion goes a long way to make the tenets of the Church's profession of faith bite size and available to the mind, the imagination, the affections, all the senses of the believer, even smell and taste.

Devotion can be the victim of its own successful appeal. The rhetorical character of devotion, that is persuasion through participation, can betray devotion's mystical underpinnings. That means that any devotion is in constant need of purgation and particularly DSH. The fall of the one so highly praised is all the more lamentable. DSH can be subject to some very mechanical aberrations. Many have undertaken to trace the roots of the devotion in the earlier Christian testimonies, the fate of the devotion in the ups and downs of church history, both the misuse of the devotion but also its potential to lead believers to deeper acceptance of the creed and the joyful participation in Liturgy. Understandably that history is often “from below.” The teaching church's struggle to accept DSH as an authentic expression of Christian faith is a badge of honor for the community's task to defend the faith. Nothing was lost in this caution. In fact the inherent dangers were disclosed before hand. The devotion ought not be the instrument of party politics either in the State or in the church. DSH has well supplied the imagery for engagement of the community in the work of social justice as a celebration of the claims of the Kingdom of God. This is even more evident when the devotion is fueled with a well biblically balanced apocalyptic underpinning.

What this means is that DSH must be lived and cherished on its own terms. Devotion belongs to “popular religion.” A church, that over stresses theology and the rational control of Christian faith, has a hard time appreciating the many sidedness of religion, institutional or “popular.” Recent changes in Latin Christianity seem to have once again trumped the rational over the sensual, theology over religion, administration over teaching, control over freedom. Seldom does the sociology of religion make its way into church teaching. The church does maintain both a creedal life and a devotional life. However, to the detriment of both they are held apart. In some cultures the restrictions break down and Catholic Christians celebrate liturgy as a genuine expression of religious “affections.” But such liturgies cause disgust to left brain liturgists. The so-called aberrations often trigger a new round of restrictions. Despite the fact that we are forever outward bound in the cosmic dance, the liturgy of the cosmos will suffer no more experimentation. Its time is passed or so says those who fail to harmonize devotion with public liturgy. Our need for religious sentiment is pushed to the sidelines. How often do people follow the Liturgy of the community with one or two devotions? Shouldn't that

tell us that the liturgy may have been robbed of its religious content? It is well known that many use devotions to prepare for participation in liturgy and to appropriate what has transpired. Great! However, should not the Liturgy itself respect the interface of beauty and holiness precisely as that interface interprets the ups and downs of our everyday lives?

DSH surely fulfills the role of devotion. Concentrated on a personal relationship with Jesus, DSH warrants all the accolades that recent Popes have given the devotion. In many ways DSH is more in tune with modern theologies than with past theologies. The devotion anticipated many of the concerns of modern theologians both in terms of the shift to the subjective and the attention to religious language and symbol making. For that reason and for others DSH seems to have found its niche in today's church. But it needs first to be readdressed in terms of religion.

What do we expect from religion? The question is asked of both personal commitment and institution. The use of the adverb “religiously” in the sentence “he exercises religiously every day” speaks of a personal commitment to a cause, governed by norms self imposed or accepted from another. From whom? Organized religion is institution. If the word “institution” is too close to the word “establishment,” then perhaps the word “movement” is better suited to capture the image of a community of people empowered to accomplish a task. The personal commitment finds itself within the movement. The task is to praise God together as a community of witness to an underlying vision of the charismatic founder. There is a story that locates the founder and offers a ritual and an ethic. The story legitimates a view of the world through symbols of the values that the community holds. The strength of the symbolic world to hold the community together comes from the power of the founder to deliver on the story, symbolized in ritual and carried out in ethics. In all of this, religion seeks to make holy, that is to be given access to the presence of the Mystery, the Ultimate Other, who is experienced as overarchingly transcendent and accessibly immanent.

Over against this sketch of religion where does devotion fit in ? One answer is to recall a Latin term *pietas* which translates a Greek term *eusebeia*. The popular English meaning of piety may be too anemic to capture the robust meaning of what the Latin says in terms of staunch loyalty, and most times to the Roman Empire. *Eusebeia* is more

like proper conduct but with a solid public regard. *Pietas* is to be seen as patriotism in the arena of the city (*polis*) and *eusebeia* might approximate what we mean by concern for the common good. The important point is that devotion translates the practice and virtue of religion into everyday categories and concerns. Devotion is the bridge builder between the myth/ritual of the movement and the lived daily experience of the religionists. However microcosmically, a world view is delivered. In the early movement, the devotion translated itself into upright living within and without the movement. In this regard Matthew 25, the “secular” parable of the sheep and goats, is profoundly religious. Can it be done without heart? DSH is to be appreciated as an exercise of religion and secularity. The devotion is both *pietas* and *eusebeia* and translates the vision of the Founder into the structures of modern living.

This brings us back to speak of DSH in terms of the charismatic founder. To speak of Jesus this way leaves some people uncomfortable; he is more than that. OK. But to begin with Jesus as founder of the movement helps to see how DSH functions in service to a big vision and integrates ritual and ethics. Boldly and broadly stated, DSH is the worship of Jesus in his role as beautifier. His heart, schooled in the spirituality of Judaism expressed in the psalms, discerns the harmonious forms that the story of salvation take, be they of Torah, Prophets or Wisdom. He has long known the beauty of God's ways with God's peoples as we see in his citation of Deutero Isaiah in his inaugural synagogal sermon in Luke 4. Jesus does not only discern beauty, he reveals the beauty. God as Plurality reveals in the heart of Jesus the harmony within God and the harmony to which all creation is called. God is Trinity, Trinity is God. Is not all love and life trinitarian? In other words, DSH is not Jesusism, not Jesus alone. DSH is Jesus in his relatedness with God and humankind. The harmony is plurality. Jesus is turned to the source of all being whom he as son calls Father. From his heart comes the Spirit of the Father and the Son. This is the primordial relationship the beauty of which engages the heart of Jesus in eternal ecstasy. God cannot be not fecund. The Son and the Spirit are as equal in that fecundity and ecstasy, self emptying, *kenosis*, humility as the Father. In his heart Jesus is who he is related to.

DSH leads us, on the strength of his primordial relation to the Father and the Spirit, through the Scriptures to identify and celebrate harmonious relations. Jesus is the

medium of the beauty. Many point to John's gospel as particularly expressive of this inner harmony in God. This is not a concern to say that John's gospel is the biblical foundation of DSH; the devotion has no one source. Rather DSH is a guide to John just as John is a guide to reading the Torah, the prophets and wisdom. The affinity between DSH and John is that John points many times to the harmonies within harmonies which make up these relations. In fact it is attention to these absorbing harmonies that makes reading John seem like going in circles: "just as, so, just so." To understand John the reader must at some point step within the movement although that movement is more spiral than cycle. This movement begins in the prologue and is still present in chapter 21 with the placing of Peter within the movement regarding the Beloved disciple. The heart attuned to harmony delights in the imaginations mediated through the text. If a mystic is open to the surplus meaning, then John's gospel calls us to mysticism. DSH prepares the heart of the reader not only to dwell where Jesus lives, his relationship with the Father in the Spirit and to be reborn from there but to daringly take the challenge of Jesus and climb the ladder of interiority. "What if...?" What a playful, loving, irresistible invitation?

There are many such invitations scattered through out the plot. All teeter on the edge of intimacy until Jesus is questioned boldly by Peter. In response to Jesus' heart touching appeal: "will you also go away?" Peter asks "to whom can we go?" (6:68) Once inside the relationship that Jesus has with the Father, the sky is the limit. The point is worth repeating. What might seem circular in John is unravelled in a heart to heart conversation. Each cycle, expressed in John's typical "as...as," reveals another harmony an impulse to feel one's feet leave the ground and be drawn up the ladder into the dwelling where Jesus lives in Trinitarian relationship. If the ladder image comes from the scene with Nathanel (1:52), any forsaking of earthiness (*fuga mundi*) read into this revelation of Jesus is belied by the word of God becoming flesh. Jesus is not without adventure and whim in his celebration of clarity, proportion and integralness. Daring his disciples to go deeper in relationship with him and through him, he asks: "what if you were to see the Son of man.....? (John 6:62, see 1:51).

Clearly in John, one can read beauty in place of or alongside the term "glory." He begins on the counter point of darkness and struggle. John's gospel is prophetic judgment of the dark. The revelation of light is prophetic condemnation of those remaining in the

dark for fear their works (not believing in Jesus, the primordial sin in John's gospel) will be revealed. Jesus is therefore no stranger to disharmony and dissonance. So the call to climb the ladder of Jacob is a call to harmonize and improvise. The more often the reader contemplates the harmonies, he or she is imbued with the light of the glory, the victory for Jesus who has overcome the world that resists him (16:33). This verse comes as conclusion to Jesus' farewell promise to send the Spirit. What a trustworthy bridge to the final prayer for the revelation to the disciples of God's glory! These are not harmonies to be seen by the naked eye; only in the Spirit, gift of his heart (7:37) does the beauty of these relations fall into place. Heart to heart with Jesus one sees all, from the heart of the Father (1:18) to the heart of the disciples, even those who closed their hearts to him, for instance in the many scenes of chapter 9.

DSH has to do with heart but primarily with the heart of the disciples. Many heart to heart encounters are registered without reference to the heart of Jesus, sometimes without reference to the heart of the disciples, often without mention of either the heart of Jesus or the heart of the disciples. Yet the reader cannot move through the text without the deepest engagement of his or her interiority. In their biographies many of the saints made known their heart to heart conversation with Jesus through the medium of the text. A particular text spoke to their hearts. With this assertion who can doubt that the language of the NT is effective propaganda? Indeed, we can ask further effective rhetoric? Who has not rejoiced with the Samaritan leper or with the forgiven woman in Simon's house? Who has not wept for the widow of Naim whose only son died? Who has not urged Jesus to do something for his friend Lazarus? Who has not answered the question: "whom do you say that I am?" Call it reader response. Call it *Lectio Divina*. Call your participation what you will but do not deny it. The word of God provides its own readership, enfleshes itself in the mind and heart of the drawn-in participant, never returns without a smile nor unfulfilled. That word is most effective when the reader forgets where he or she is, gets absorbed, ecstatic, outside of oneself.

In the history of Christian mysticism, and particularly of DSH, there is often the story of an exchange of hearts. How can it be otherwise? Since Origin it has been said that the heart is the leader of the whole body and that the word of God comes especially to the heart. Nothing speaks more to interiority than the symbol of word since it begins

deep within a person and reaches its target only by entering deeply the heart of the hearer. “I give you my word.” We want our words to be heard, not in one ear and out the other. Where do we want them to go? Understood yes, accepted, struggled with, made one's own, received, accepted. If the ancients saw the heart as receiver of the word having hegemony over the whole person the heart and word also came together for the sustaining of the whole person. Mary was sustained in her pondering of the word in her heart. The word “sustain” has a very modern ring to it. This work is the touchstone of an ecological mind set and an ecological spirituality. The implications have to come to the heart of imagination and circulation.

The author of the Letter to the Ephesians presents not only Pauline thinking but also imitates Pauline prayer. A letter is a substitute for personal presence. We often say that we wish we were with the reader. Its value is hiked when the writer is an apostle. The letter then is apostolic communication, connecting the movement to its roots. Paul wrote less to direct the head than to move the heart. We do not see this if we only keep the so-called doctrinal parts and throw away the rest. But seen as a whole, the letters appeal deeply to the reader's heart and through the reader to the heart of the listeners. Who then can be surprised if in writing such a letter as Ephesians, the text should become a liturgical text? Even in the writing the author is moved to prayer in what is called an epistolary liturgy. The communication is a prayer of thanksgiving and petition. The prayer has been cherished for a long time as expressive of DSH. I point to it because it elicits reader response from the heart in its earnest appeal for communion in prayer: Ephesians 3:14-19.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

The final doxology is built around the heart of imagination that divines beauty.

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

No, DSH is not Jesus on his own, alone. DSH relates to Jesus in his relationship with the Father and in the Spirit: the Father is petitioned to grant strength through the Holy Spirit. Trinity is a mystery, a beautiful harmony to be lived. The Ephesians are to live out of a surplus of power that defies “asking or imagination.” The author dug down deeply to come up with a word to express this excess that God can achieve—superabundantly—calling all generations to give glory forever! Before we say “over the top” let’s say that our heart work has only begun because we cannot even imagine the power that is given to us (v.16) to love and to know and precisely in that order, to love and then to know, an aspect of the devotion often noted by Benedict XVI.

The Ephesian text is inexhaustible, an embarrassment of riches! The mega word “superabundantly” is not alone. The text mediates a vision of immense vision and vitality. How to translate such exuberance finds its answer two ways: prayer and reparation. The context is prayer and the goal is: *so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*. May Christ well in your hearts to know love that you may be filled with all the fullness (*pleroma*) of God. What is this fullness of God? This fullness is even more worked out in the twin to this letter, namely the Letter to the Colossians where 1:15-20 is a hymn of praise to this fullness. The next verses (vs 20-23) describe the new (heart) condition of the Colossians. In 1:24 we read Paul’s statement of his reparative purpose: *“I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.”* Is this not a reliable echo of the confessional heart of Paul making appeal for solidarity in his service (*diakonia* Colossians 1: 23,24) “that you may be filled with the fullness of God” (See Ephesians 3:19)?

What does “complete what is lacking to the sufferings of Christ” mean? Each word here has a history, carrying a weight of meaning. The language is apocalyptic meaning that the Pauline author is thinking in terms of the whole cosmos and he is joined with Christ in the filling out what is lacking to its ultimate consummation. He wants to

fill out what is yet to be achieved through the sufferings of Christ, not of Jesus but of the Christ, the whole body of Christians in the peopled cosmos. The whole cosmos is the concern of God's economy of salvation (Col 1:25), a function of God's creating.

Many think that reparation is restoration, a going back in nostalgia to the pristine, good old days. No! Reparation is a re-envisioning the world in which there is a constant process of harmony, disharmony and new harmony. The early Christians viewed God's future as one of struggle and tribulations, not to get back anywhere but to move forward. The vision of an ever expanding universe fits well this completing what is yet to be done in the cosmic dance played out on earth in terms of social justice which is our shorthand for the preaching of the gospel in all of creation under the heaven (v.23). DSH relishes the harmonies involved here, seeing the immediate deed in a wider framework. For example, Peter in healing the man, paralyzed from birth, (Acts 3:1-10) presses forward with the work of Jesus, a continuity signaled in a response of praise similar to the acclamation in many gospel stories. The community of Christ presses forward on the wider screen of apocalyptic fulfillment. Peter in his sermon 3:11-26) speaks of the *already* of the "time of comfort" (v.19) and the *not yet* of "universal restoration." (v.21) This is an exquisitely harmonious framework within which to pursue the work of reparative love. Such a framework is even more at home in a post Darwinian theology of social justice than in a theology of salvation narrowly focused on saving souls or comforting a pitiable Jesus.

Reparation was once viewed within an understanding of salvation as appeasement of God who is offended. One had to make up to God what was lost. Coupled with other words (expiation, immolation, sacrifice) this notion of appeasement led to a distorted view of the Christian message. Yes, humans are called to be involved in the economy of salvation but clearly out of a surrender to what God is doing in Christ. The word "atonement" read as at-one-ment, helps regain a balance. God in Christ is God with us, at one with us, at-one-ment. God is subject of the verb to atone. God who in Christ is reconciling the world to Godself atones. We do not atone to God; God atones. God is the savior through Christ, into whose mission we as Christians are baptized and in whose mission all humankind and all creation need find a respective worship filled participation.

The harmony here is that God's fulfillment of the divine economy is to save humankind through humankind.

Reparation is hardwired into creation. The one made in God's image is relied upon by the Creator to do his or her part. This is better said as "their" part because the first reparation is collaboration. How unwise it would be to exclude reparation as Christian involvement from a post Darwinian view of the world. Reparation does not belong exclusively to religious language, the language of salvation. Reparation is a consistent thread in the unfolding of a turbulent cosmos because of the constant adjustment to gravity. Space travel is teaching us a lot about flight correction. If you will, reparation is human participation in cosmic correction. God's gravity is experienced in all of creation, the allure of beauty as once the stuff of poetry and cosmological speculation. *Poesia* is no one's monopoly.

No surprise therefore that DSH is greatly concerned to be part of God's at-one-ment with the world, the universe, the cosmos. Reparation is harmonization, improvisation, "on-the-fly" composition as the music rolls. Free will has no small part to play in delight and novelty, comedy and tragedy. Reparation is keeping it fluid not in order to minimally "get through this thing" but maximally to flourish.

Flourishing was seen as a goal of Stoic philosophy which is often seen as the psychology of its day. Flourishing is no less the goal of embracing the dark which is so much a part of the interface of psychology and spirituality today. We flourish as humans when out of fluidity and movement we confront the darkness that invades our space. If the sufferings characteristic of the final times invades our space, our own victory in living with chaos is a completion of what is lacking to the sufferings of Christ to build a more just world in solidarity with people, however we may be the poor. This victory, a minor resurrection, a little hope on the way to the big hope (Benedict XVI) is what we bring to the hearing of the word of God at Sunday liturgy in the victorious procession of John's Apocalypse to the marriage feast of the Lamb in a setting of exquisite beauty on the streets of the new city, Jerusalem.

The victory needs celebration and sharing. DSH trains the disciple to receive the victory where it touches most. Proportionate to communion in the sufferings of Christ is the power of the Resurrection. The word "power" taken here from Philippians 3 echoes

the triple usage of another word, dynamism in the Ephesian passage. Victory is feeling equipped, prepared and equal to the challenge out of the dynamism of the One who is at work within us. There is harmony on every rung of the ladder of interiority. The word of God sustains this victory, guides the heart and the heart, in discerning the harmony, beholds the beauty.

These brief reflections invite a new appreciation of DSH. Some claim that the Latin word *convenientia* meaning “fittingness,” often used by the ancient theologians means beautiful because harmonious. The three component pieces that we noted in the assessment of beauty: clarity, proportion and wholeness might be applied to “fittingness.” All of this suggests that DSH may be a genuinely fitting, a beautiful devotion for living the Christian life as we move forward into a new age. DSH is then found less wanting than unexplored.

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