

We Live In A Sacramental Universe - by Sr. Margaret Dorgan, DCM

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WE LIVE IN A SACRAMENTAL UNIVERSE

Who is the God we worship and what do we mean to this God? Did God create us and then lose interest as some of the Greek philosophers taught? To them, created nature just wasn't worth the attention of a Divine Being. "I've made you. Farewell."

The Jewish and Christian tradition proclaims what is wholly different. God never says Good-bye to us. We have had revealed part of the mystery of an Infinite Creator Who looks on finite being-- whatever has been made-- with limitless concern. To all that has been shaped and brought into existence, God says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jer 31:3).

If human beings had the perfection of angels, such never-failing love would be understandable. But we are a wounded race, marked by transgression and resistance to a Father's original plan. Even so, God says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love," and then adds, "Therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." We may walk away, but this God will never depart from us and is always soliciting our return. "Again I will restore you and you shall be rebuilt" (Jer 31:4). The Psalmist gives us the same assurance. "Steadfast is God's kindness toward us. The fidelity of the Lord endures forever" (Ps 117:2).

In every aspect of our lives, we are touched by God, Who reaches out to us in whatever transpires. A heavenly Providence overshadows all that is made of earthly matter. We live in a sacramental universe. Finite being does not go beyond its own limited boundaries but still it wondrously conveys more than itself. Creatures image their Maker and speak to each one of us with a message made especially for our understanding. What I myself see of God is not exactly the same as what you behold. There is likeness, of course, but God connects uniquely with each person called into being.

Faith tells me my Creator is present in everything I experience. I call upon the Holy Spirit to deepen that awareness so the moments, various as they are, may unfold their content as designed by God. They come with a purpose, and that purpose is to join me to the Eternal One in ever-closer union.

It is all too possible to waste what God pours into my life, paying little heed to what should draw me to wonder. St. John of the Cross, whose teaching on prayer led to his being designated a Doctor of the Church, urges me to ask for help that I may be more aware of the divine presence as my future unfolds. "Oh, how sweet Your presence will be to me, You who are the supreme Good. I must draw near You in silence...that You may be pleased to unite me to You, and I will not rest until I rejoice in Your arms" (Saying of Light and Love, #124). God's loving embrace reaches out to me constantly.

The Holy Spirit helps me become alert to the sacramental symbolism surrounding my life and deepens my sense of divine reality through *recollection*, a word spiritual writers use to describe prayer that keeps me in touch with God in a gentle, ongoing way. St. John of the Cross pleads, "Now I ask You, Lord, not to abandon me at any time in my recollection, for I am a spendthrift of my soul" (Ibid).

We pray to Jesus who looked with human eyes on the world we see, to help us not squander the lavish bounty imparted to us in our personal sphere of existence. We are privileged recipients of the Good News of salvation. We have been given a vision of the universe which sees all parts of it as sacramental in a wide sense of the term. Our eyes perceive how the eternal comes to us in symbolic forms as day succeeds day. Time becomes transparent with what the poet Henry Vaughn called "bright shoots of everlastingness."

"I will sing to the Lord all my life. I will sing praise to my God while I live" (Ps 104:33). St. John of the Cross sang those lines, and I ask him to help me in my earthly song that I may not be "a spendthrift of my soul."

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