

Today we celebrate Cosmos Sunday. Usually when we think of Creation, we think of Planet Earth or maybe of this solar system. But in recent years we have seen astonishing images coming from telescopes like the Hubble space station. These images of distant solar systems, supernovas, quasars and the like have fueled huge advances in scientific understanding of the universe. No longer can we think of Creation as just this extraordinary blue-green planet with the huge problems we have brought to it. Instead, we get to expand our understanding of Creation and our place in this ever-expanding cosmos. We can see it as a sacrament – an outward and visible sign of the inward grace of God’s love.

This change bring up two questions for me; firstly, how does God fit into the new cosmic picture, and secondly how does humanity fit in?

Passages like the first one we heard this morning describe the universe as it was understood by the ancient people – a flat earth with curved heavens above it. And that is what we would expect whenever we read the scriptures – they describe the world as it was known then. The speaker is the personification of Wisdom, which many Christians across the centuries have seen as a way of talking about the Cosmic Christ.

And that’s who Paul is talking about in the letter to the Colossians. The Cosmic Christ is the one who is before all things and in whom all things hold together. As I discussed in our series on the Nicene Creed, the Christ came forth from God the Creator, the fountain fullness. We know the Christ as he is manifest in Jesus, incarnate as a human, but the Christ is much more than that one human incarnation.

He was there at the very beginning of time. It is through and in him that the cosmos was and is being created. In Revelation we hear, “I am making the whole of creation new. . . . It will come true. . . . It is already done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.” (Revelation 21:5-6)

We often talk about Jesus Christ as if Christ is Jesus’ last name, not understanding that Christ is the cosmic force, the God that is creation. We, the church, are the Body of Christ, but in an even bigger sense, creation is the Body of Christ. The Christ is wherever and whenever the spiritual and the material intersect, which is everywhere.¹ And the Christ, as we see in Jesus’ incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection is also the embodiment of Love; so love is the central energy of the cosmos.

God did not just create a big bang and walk away. God, in the Christ, is the very stuff of which the universe is made. And in Jesus, the Christ became human and walked among us.

In Romans 8, we learn that we who are enrolled in the reign of God are to be conformed to the image of God’s Son, so that he may be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. (Rom 8:29) I’ll repeat that. We are to be conformed to the image of God’s Son so that he may be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

That’s where humanity fits in. We are not the center of everything. God is. When we exploit the earth we exploit the Christ. But we are called to be Christ-like. God intends for us to become like Christ.

Fr. Bede Griffiths was a holy man, a mystic and scholar who lived at the intersection of Christianity and Hinduism. He said “the first big bang began the creation of the universe; the resurrection was the second big bang that began the creation of a divine humanity; and the radiation of that resurrection

¹ Richard Rohr, *The Cosmic Christ*, <https://cac.org/the-cosmic-christ-2015-11-05/>

power and force is what the humble lover and servant of the Cosmic Christ... can access for a total transformation of the total being.”²

That’s where we fit in. The big bang of the universe’s creation started a process that led over millions of years to the creation of planets out of the dust of imploding stars and eventually to humanity; human beings with a greater degree of consciousness than any other creature; beings more like God than any other creature. The big bang of the resurrection began the process that will lead to the creation of a divine humanity, and it is that resurrection power that is available to us as we yearn to draw closer to God, as the Holy Spirit teaches us how to pray and works in us the good work of sanctification.

We are the most evolved creature and yet we are totally dependent upon the supportive environment around us. Every second the sun burns 600 million tons of matter and in the process makes the light that we depend upon. We depend upon light and upon plants’ ability to turn that into food for our survival. Everything we eat started as a combination of stardust and sunlight. The sun is gradually being used up – it is dying so that we might live.

We cannot live long without food, and we cannot produce food without the community of plants and animals that support us. Food constantly brings us back from our proud isolation into connection with the rest of creation. Yet we have created a consumer industry out of food, we have managed to create a situation where 30 to 40% of all food grown is wasted, where 1 billion people go hungry every day while another \$1.5 billion are obese.

Jesus’s ministry was all about food. It has been said that he would eat anything anywhere with anyone. He was not a gourmet, he probably had days when he went hungry, but he used food to bring deeper connections among people. He used stories about creation to explain the new life he was bringing in the reign of God. In today’s Gospel reading he goes as far as to describe himself as bread. “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the cosmos is my flesh.”

If Christ is throughout creation, then everything we eat is Christ. **Every** time we eat we are taking Christ into us. But here in the sacrament of the bread and wine, it is intensified because we are together intentionally, to follow Jesus’ instructions to his disciples and to share the symbolic meal. We are continuing the ritual, the symbolic act that Jesus the Christ himself instituted and we know that God is especially close to us here. In fact, we are taking Christ into ourselves in a particularly intense way, and as our bodies digest and use this food we are being changed into the Christ, as we say in the Eucharistic prayer, “bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, loving and caring in the world.”

But it is not just us and God; it is all creation. We pray, “Loving God, through your goodness we have this bread and wine to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made.” Which earth has given. Bread and wine made from stardust and sunlight – the energy of dying stars given to us. Bread and wine which connect us intimately to the whole cosmos.

So as we gather at the table today let us bring with us not just ourselves and those whom we love, but our yards with the insects and microbes who live there, our county with its agriculture and shortage of water, our planet with its warming, and beyond it the whole cosmos of stars, solar systems and black

² Andrew Harvey, *Teachings of the Cosmic Christ from Fr Bede Griffiths*,
<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/christpathseminar/2013/06/teachings-of-the-cosmic-christ-from-fr-bede-griffiths/>

matter; those who are dying and those who are being born.

But let us make sure that this awareness does not stop here. We will pray that through this meal “we may be healed and become agents of healing for Earth as a precious planet in our cosmos.” May the awareness of our connection with all life continue as we step out the door. May the radiation of the big bang of the resurrection continue to work in our hearts and change our lives.

I’m going to close with a story the contemporary mystic, Andrew Harvey tells of sitting at Fr Bede Griffiths side in his last days,

one night I was sitting by his bedside and holding his hands, speaking tenderly to him. And suddenly, naked in his bed, he sat up. He looked at the door, and it seemed that someone very extraordinary, perhaps even the One himself, was there in the door, because his face was lit up with an ecstasy not of this world. And I was almost frightened because to be in the presence of such holiness is a very frightening thing.

And then he said again and again and again and again four words that sum up, I believe, our whole evolutionary moment. He said: “Serve the growing Christ. Serve the growing Christ. Serve the growing Christ. Serve the growing Christ.”³

Awesome pictures from the Hubble Space Telescope https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loXDVGi_IK0

³ <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/christpathseminar/2013/06/serve-the-cosmic-christ/>