

Light of Love

Awaken!
Our universe is grand and wide
It stretches like gum ready
To blow a bubble.
A universe indifferent to life
Yet the mother of all life.

The opening of this poem written by scientist and scholar Ilia Delio, came to mind as I recalled a precious evening I spent with my sister and mother this past summer. As most of you are aware, I took a medical leave of absence from work shortly after Easter. During my time away, I had many opportunities to spend time at my mother's place in Rosalind, a small village about 25 km's southeast of Camrose. During those times, I spent many hours walking, traveling country roads, revelling in remarkable displays of bird migration activities and coming to an ever-greater appreciation of nature's wonder, beauty, and healing gifts.

One night, my mother, sister, and I sat on the deck to watch a meteorite shower that had been on display for quite a number of evenings. As I lay on a blanket on the deck we quietly observed the expanse of a dark sky brilliantly alive with stars and galaxies. One cannot appreciate such a display of the cosmos unless you are out in the country free of street lights and houses lit up.

As I watched the heavens, hoping to see a meteor or two, (which we did), it was breathtaking. Lying on the deck and endeavoring to take in the massiveness of that relatively small piece of the universe, I felt at peace. I sensed that I was very small, yet loved. I felt embraced, protected, and entirely in the presence of God. I have been struggling with Generalized Anxiety Disorder, yet there was calmness and quiet within me at that moment.

I recalled something from a book entitled *The Comfort Book* by Matt Haig, who has lived with the challenges of depression and anxiety his entire life. In a brief tidbit of comfort, called "Watch the Star," he wrote, "I can remember one night in the middle of a depression feeling suicidal and looking up at a cloudless sky of infinite stars. I felt a mental pain so deep it was physical. But seeing the sky, our small glimpse of the universe, flooded me with hope that I would one day be able to appreciate such a sight again. Beauty is any moment that makes us gasp with the hope and wonder of life, and the world is full of such moments. They shine in the

dark. And they are ours for the taking. "Dwell on the beauty of life," wrote Marcus Aurelius in his *Meditations* two millennia ago, 'watch the stars, and see yourself running with them."

Perhaps what we unconsciously sense in our struggles when we open ourselves to the wonder of creation, is love, which is God. In those precious moments, perhaps we are reassured that we are embraced and sustained by this divine love that is in, around and beyond all life.

I have been reading *The Hours of the Universe, Reflections on God, Science, and the Human Journey* by Franciscan Sister Iliia Delio, a passionate scientist and scholar whose enthusiasm about the interplay of science, God and human life, is inspiring.

Along with many ancient Christian mystics, Indigenous peoples, and other creation spiritualities, she believes that God exists as creation, as the cosmos, as the universe. Many theologians, and even cosmologists and scientists are acknowledging that our modern world requires that our theology, our questions about the meaning of life must include science, psychology, quantum physics, cosmology, and so much more. Ancient and modern authors such as Teilhard de Chardin, Meister Eckhart, Iliia Delio, Richard Rohr, and numerous others are helping us to understand the oneness of all life, with God's love at its center. The message that most profoundly inspires my faith comes from knowing that the tapestry of life is woven together by love, God's love that is in and part of everything that exists.

The 13-century Oxford theologian Robert Grosseteste believed that all physical life has its origin in light. He believed that 'God's creation, a single point of light, which, through expansion and extension, evoked the entire physical order into existence."

Science discoveries since the 13th century, especially the revelations of quantum physics and the activity of light in the quantum world, are revealing just how intricate, confusing, chaotic, exciting and mind-boggling is the ever-evolving universe that houses this world we call home. As we know, quantum physics has staged a new understanding of how matter, energy, and gravitational waves shape the fabric of the universe and the evolution of the universe.

We are learning that the universe is far from static; "rather," says Delio, "our universe is a mysterious ocean of energy and matter in which space and time are interwoven and dynamic, able to stretch, shrink, and jiggle." Intellectual scientists such as Delio and others seek to help people of faith understand how new scientific revelations require of us to rethink our spirituality. Quantum energy jumps from here to there in chaotic ways

but then at times forms itself into something static. Delio sees God as more and more the ultimate energy of dizzying moving love, living quite comfortably in the quantum leaps between struggle and ache and beauty and order.

I could well imagine as I watched a meteor zoom through the sky that God's love was on its way to another place where it was needed even as that love continued to reside above, around, and within me. Delio writes: "Everything that exists speaks of God, reflects that love energy of God. But God is more than anything that exists. God is always the more of our lives. We can't contain God. If we try to control God, that's not God; God always spills over our lives. So, God is our future. If we're longing for something we desire, it's that spilled-over love of our lives that's pulling us onward that's luring us into something new." We need to trust this God.

We have been living through exceedingly difficult times with the COVID-19 pandemic, the struggles in Afghanistan, economic upheaval and climate change. We have seen pain and suffering caused by injustice, racial discrimination, violence, anger, and war. More and more people suffer from depression and anxiety. Yet even amid all this suffering and tragedy, for Delio, the message of Jesus was one of 'seeing, believing, and trusting in the living, moving, the constant presence of love, of God.

There is hope in believing that God's love continues to permeate the known and the unknown, thrives in the chaos and the stability, and is ever present in the uncertainty and in the hope. In one of his daily meditations Richard Rohr writes, "God is alive. God is love. Love is pulling us on to do new things, and we need to trust the power of God in our lives to do new things. . . We need to unwire ourselves to recognize that the God of Jesus Christ is, you might say, the power beneath our feet, the depth of the beauty of everything that exists, and the future in which we which we are moving.

Every one of us is written in the heart of God from all eternity, born into the stars, born, you might say, into the galaxies, born on this earth in small forms, developing and coming to explicit form in our lives, given a name. It's a fantastic mystery of love."

As I lay on the deck watching the stars I recognized the power of embodied LOVE, and how that love was alive and living in, with, through, and beyond me. I believe that this jiggling, moving, jumping, chaotic and sometimes static love can transform the world, "so that all may know the LOVE that is GOD." Amen.