

What if the Universe is the Body of God?

August 14, 2022

Dona Nobis Pacem

Bring us Peace.

Amen.

You know that I was at Chautauqua in New York state last month, and this week's attack on a speaker there, Salman Rushdie, has left me quite shaken.

But together with the horror,
I am also moved,
moved by the accounts, that, when the attack began,
the whole audience seemed to rise and move toward the stage,
toward the violence, and dozens of regular folks,
leapt up onto the stage
toward an angry man with a knife to stop him.
to try bring peace.

Dona nobis pacem.

This morning, at this moment,
thousands of all faiths have gathered there for worship
in that amphitheater
as they come to terms with the violence that filled
that one-time Methodist Missionary retreat.

Let us pause for a moment of silence with them.

There is criticism for that amphitheater's openness
even if that is what the speaker preferred,

but openness is part of what life and faith
seems to require of us
as challenging and risky as that is.

My week there brought challenges to heart and mind
part of a summer of great personal spiritual discovery.
including encounters with wondrous teachers,
and study of scripture
which has brought a profound evolving of my
understanding of the nature of God, creation,
Jesus of Nazareth, and the Christ.
Openness changes everything.

Meanwhile, this summer
the James Webb Telescope,
has been sending us from deep space,
images five so far,
with revelatory detail
that are changing our way of looking at the universe.

And today, I am putting these adventures together
Inviting you to travel with me
into the cosmos,
to give yourself time to see what is there,
and, with our scriptures and help from
wise teachers, Richard Rohr, Thomas Merton and Karl Rahner,
to open ourselves to be witnesses of
the beauty and love of the God of heaven and earth.

Music and imagery starts – 20 seconds



The Carina Nebula

Creation

Genesis 1: 1-5.46. 20.

“In the beginning when God created^[a] the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void

and darkness covered the face of the deep,

while a wind from God^[b] swept over the face of the waters.

³ Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.

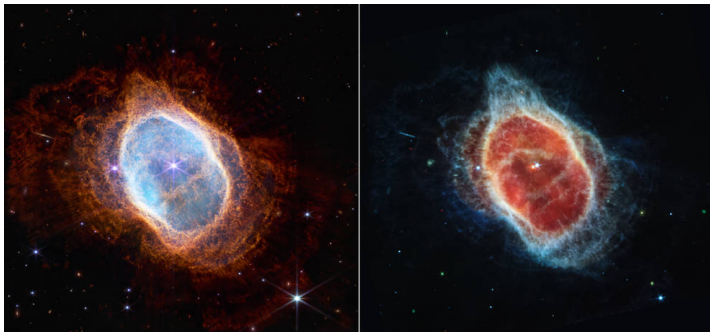
⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness, Night.

And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.”

1:15

Everything visible, without exception, has come forth from God’s own being. Matter is the eternal, outflowing movement of divine presence into the physical world.

The universe is the body of God.
God is everything that was,
everything that is,
God is reality with a loving face,
and God is that power that is love,
that binds everything together.



Southern Ring Nebula^{2.17}

“Universe”

the word means– “brought into one”

We arise out of the oneness that we call God.
and all the uni-verse revolves around
one coherent center.

Not a fixed point,
but a divine presence
that centers everywhere
and circumferences nowhere.

A center that
connects and communes
and invites us, .
into conscious union
with all that God has made
and God's own being
in which we live.



Deep Field

Here is the image astronomers are calling
“Deep Field”

The clearest and deepest view we
have ever had of the universe.

at

Those disks of light,
aren't individual stars

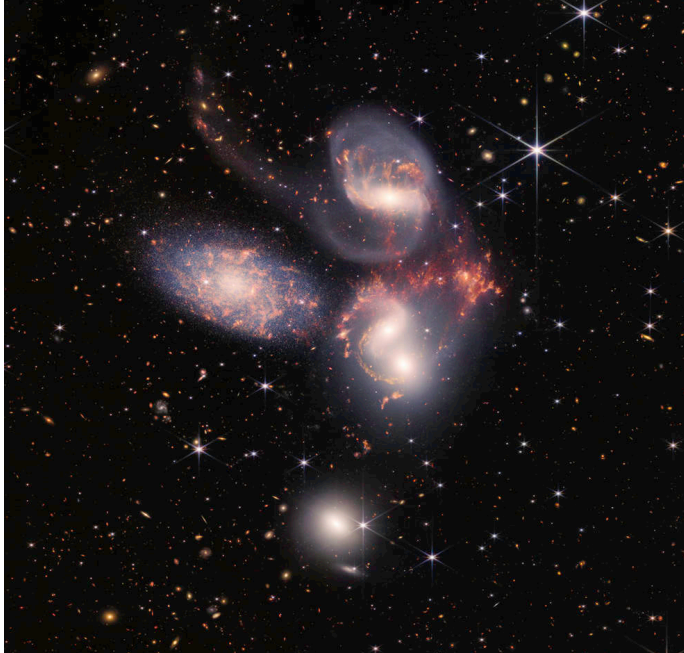
they are galaxies,
and there are billions more than we thought there were,
each, like our own Milky Way,
teeming with a hundred thousand million stars and solar systems.

When we look at this field,
we are looking back in time,
You see those red ones?
Some of those were formed
within a few billion years of the big bang
Their light has reached us,
but they are long since stardust.

What a wonder.
And if it is wondrous to us,
Surely God who has given us the capacity to wonder.
is in love with this universe.

As Genesis tells us,
God found it all good:
the first star that lit the sky
the waters that flowed,
the first fish that swam in the seas,
and the original fauna
first peoples.

God is in intimate kinship
with all that is made.



Stephen's Quintet. 5.00

Since the beginning of time,
God's spirit has been spinning out
glory and goodness.

God's endlessly diverse energy and spirit
is visible in
every bird and leaf,
and the light from every star

and every story.
yours, mine;
born of God,
all inherently holy and beloved.

St Francis of Assisi looked at the heavens and earth
and claimed kinship with all he saw.
Brother Sun, Sister Moon.

Brother Fire, Sister Water,

*We are not alone, You are not your own,
we are inherently connected
to all things, to one another,
to the most distant of galaxies*

All things have a place
all of us have a place in the heart of God
if we believe this,
and trust this
for now
and eternity,
then we never need be truly lonely again



6.40. Cartwheel Galaxy

We search the heavens for signs of life

as we know it:
air, water, carbon,
and intelligence.

We hope for it
and we dread it.
For if we find other life,
especially conscious life out there,
what would that mean
for our story,
for the story of Jesus,
our earth's place in all that is?

Yet, if all that is
flows from God's own being;
if we all live in the body of God,
then we are not in competition
for God's attention.

There are no insiders and outsiders
in God.
We are *a part of main,*
a piece of the whole.

You are an irreplaceable,
permanent and beloved member
of the reality of God.



*The only really absolute mysteries
in Christianity
are the self-communication of God
in the depths of existence –
which we call grace-
and in history –
which we call Christ.*

Karl Rahner, priest and theologian.

John 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²

He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, ^[a] and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Colossians 1

The Christ, writes Paul, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; The Christ is before all things, and in Christ all things hold together. ¹⁸

The Christ,
came forth in Jesus of Nazareth:
matter and spirit together,
making holy mystery visible.

Jesus
revealed the essential, universal truth
of God as love,
embodied that love for us,
invited the disciples into a new community
to love one another
beyond boundaries,
just as we are loved beyond boundaries.

And so challenged our human ways
that limit and restrict God.

To accept this required openness and change,
some could not and took his mortal life,
yet he still illuminates everything,
and through him we learn that the path of
life and death and resurrection
is the way of all creation,
of every star and creature,
of every one of us.

Life, death and resurrection –
is the way we grow and change

and deepen in love and understanding.
It is the way of the divine heart.

If there is life elsewhere,
life, death and resurrection
is the way there, too.



Praise the Lord, all ye children of the earth
Let heaven and earth bless the Lord
our maker
who is leading us somewhere good.