



## **“Living in the Universal Christ”**

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Colossians 1: 15-20

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Imagine Jesus, a good Jew, praying these lines from Psalm 138:

“You dwell in me, in the Holy Temple of all souls;

my gratitude knows no bounds!

For You are the Holy one, the Breath of our breath.

On the day that I called, You answered me;

the strength of my soul You increased...

You are a very Presence as I face my fears and doubts;

Your strength upholds me.”

Jesus’ psalm and our psalm.

I ask you to think for moment about an encounter you have had with God: an experience of the Divine, of Holiness, transcendence\_\_ a happening you might consider a moment of grace. Abraham Maslow would call it a Peak Experience. Remember the context of your life at that time. How old were you? Were you alone or with another? Travel back to the experience: Were you outdoors, near water or mountain, perhaps deeply caught up in beauty, or perhaps aware of the miracle of a child, a partner; or maybe it occurred while listening to music, or within a worship experience. Whatever happened, our “God talk” this morning may seem artificial or intellectual by comparison to your powerful lived experience. I find myself returning to such wonderfully remembered moments from time

to time, especially when I am feeling down and searching for reassurance or spiritual comfort.

Hopefully we have all enjoyed an experience of God and I assume that every one of us has also questioned who and where God is, who we are, how the created world got started, and what is our connection with the beyond, the holy.

Several months ago I found myself floundering in my prayer life. I tried going back to Teilhard de Chardin, rereading *The Divine Milieu* that meant so much to me in the 1960s. Teilhard's was a beautifully incarnational approach to life, full of Christ. A paleontologist and geologist by training, and also a priest, his was very much a scientific approach. I loved where he seemed to be headed in the *Divine Milieu* but getting there was a struggle. His foundational premise was that **love** is the very physical structure of the Universe. Mind boggling.

Then I saw an announcement of Richard Rohr's latest book, *The Universal Christ*, and found a new way to revitalize my faith in Christ. Here were Teilhard's insights in language that totally engaged me, that transformed the theology I have lived with for most of my life to a more thoroughly incarnational world view that deeply excited me.

Richard Rohr had already taken me back to the very beginning with new eyes to better understand Trinity in his marvelous book *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation*. He offered a new way to understand the triune God as triune **relationships**, a **divine dance**. Rohr describes the three distinguishable but never separate expressions of Divinity. He suggests that we not start with the One and try to make it into Three, but start with the Three and see their **relationships** as the deepest nature of the One. 43

On the Transpersonal level we envision God as Father/Mother/Creator; on the Personal level we know God as Jesus Christ, fully Divine and fully human. On the Interpersonal level we know God as living Spirit, as inspiration. The three are always One and we, along with all of creation, are one with and in them and they in us. 82.

*The Universal Christ* presents the creation of **all that exists** as the first incarnation. We read in Colossians “In Christ were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and invisible...Before anything was created, Christ existed, and all things hold together in Christ.” Rohr therefore stresses that through the act of creation, “God manifested the eternally outflowing Divine Presence into the physical and material world.” God is united with **everything**. And Christ is there from the beginning, long before the second incarnation in the birth of Jesus.

The Prologue to John’s Gospel starts: “In the beginning was the Word...and the Word became flesh and stayed for a little while among us.”

Rohr proclaims that “Christ is God, and Jesus is the Christ’s historical manifestation in time...Jesus is a Third Someone, not just God and not just man, but God and human together (19).”

The profound, life-shaping truth is that humanity has never been separated from God in Christ; Paul’s summary statement is that from the beginning all of humanity has been in Christ, in Greek, *En Cristo*. Of course, humans can choose to deny this Christ given identity. What a powerful realization for me, that Christ was from the beginning and all of us are in Christ from birth...all of Creation is in Christ. How might such truth show up in our day to day living and loving?

The Christian life is simply a matter of becoming who we already are. John writes “See what love Abba God has lavished on us in letting us be called God’s children! Yet that in fact is what we are.”

I love the way Julian of Norwich describes our connection. Christ’s soul and our soul are like an everlasting knot. The deeper we move in our own being, the closer we come to Christ. Go deep and find yourself in Christ. And the closer we come to Christ’s soul, the nearer we move to the heart of one another. In Christ, we hear not foreign sounds but the deepest intimations of the human and the divine intertwined.

What that actually means will hopefully show up in how we live and love and share and give. The call is in our hands and minds and hearts. Call and Response. How do we respond?

If we were already one with God in Christ, why did Jesus Die? Since he was fully human, of course he had to die. God did not demand that human sin required the death of Jesus in order for humanity to be redeemed. The cross was a freely chosen revelation of Total Love on God's part "meant to utterly shock the heart and turn it back toward trust and love of the Creator (144)."

Rohr's explanation: "Jesus was killed in a collision of cross-purposes, conflicting interests, and half-truths, caught between the demands of an empire and the religious establishment of his day. The cross was the price Jesus paid for living in a 'mixed' world, which is both human and divine, simultaneously broken and utterly whole."<sup>147</sup> Again the question: what is our response?

Rohr concludes *The Universal Christ* with a profound meditation entitled "The Divine Mirror" that hints at what it is to live In Christ, and takes us back to our Advent mirror: Here is a small part of the meditation:

"Relationship is the core and foundational shape of Reality,  
Mirroring our Trinitarian God.  
Every object serves as a mirror, another kind of presence.  
You can find such mirrors in all of nature, in animals,  
In your parents, lovers, children, books, pictures, movies,  
And even in what some call "God" ...  
One day, the mirror will reflect in both directions,  
And we will see over there what was allowed in here,  
This is full-access seeing—and being seen  
Most have named it 'heaven'  
And it begins now,  
Let the Divine Mirror fully receive you,  
All of you.

...And you will never be lonely again, Amen