

GLOBAL CONTEMPLATION A LIVING COSMIC ADVENT WREATH EMBRACED IN MERCY



A Living Cosmic Advent Wreath – during three regional gatherings held in the first week of Advent 2020, Sisters, Associates and Partners in Mercy (each one of whom is a channel of God's mercy in our world in this time) created together a living Cosmic Advent Wreath. Two hundred and three Mercy women and men from twelve countries (Australia, Canada, Guyana, Guam, Ireland, Kenya, New Zealand, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States of America) shared their reflections which had been gathered in personal and communal contemplation begun two weeks before the regional gatherings.

The Cosmic Advent Wreath is rooted in “deep incarnation” – week one: Birth of the Universe; week two: Birth of the solar system; week three: Birth of Jesus the Christ; and week four: My Birth into the Whole Cosmic Body of the Universe). The fifth moment is centered on “All is One,” that moment which Pope Francis speaks about as the “joy of our hope.” In our personal and communal contemplation prior to the regional gatherings, for each of the five moments we were encouraged to reflect on three questions: what sadness do I feel? What joy do I feel? What is my dream born out of . . . ?

From the first regional gathering for the Asia Pacific which began with a welcome in Te Reo Maori and English to the closing with its living Christmas blessing (Pat Bergen, csj – “May the Star of inclusive, poured out, communing love direct every decision you make on your journey”), this was truly a moment of global contemplation. Music, images, poetry, and conversation were shared and treasured. All five moments came alive during the three gatherings.

God's love outpoured in the creation of the Cosmos – participants asked “What is trying to incarnate through me/us at this moment of our evolutionary journey? How do we enable the unfolding of the universe? What do we need to do/be to awaken?” Meister Eckhart was quoted, “God creates the entire universe fully and totally in the present now. . . God creates the whole cosmos in the innermost depths of every soul now.” The full moon during the week which held the regional gatherings was a gift, reminding us of our shared place in the Cosmos.

God's incarnation in the creation of the solar system – many spoke to the natural disasters and the loss of home of so many throughout our globe. This led to an awareness of a new call to respond together to create new places and spaces where the incarnation can happen for those suffering poverty and homelessness. One participant quoted Duane Elgin's words, “Where a dead-universe perspective generates alienation, environmental destruction, and despair, a living-universe perspective generates feelings of communion, stewardship, and the promise of a higher pathway for humanity.” The sense of the living and intimate presence of our common home was reflected in the words, “The Earth has music for those who listen.”

God's incarnation in the person of Jesus the Christ – for most participants, there was an awareness that “deep incarnation” is new to our thinking, to our theology and to our engaged spirituality – new but most welcomed. Attention was drawn to an article on November 26, 2020, in *The Irish Catholic* written by Bairbre Cahill, “An Advent invitation: sit with the depth and power and pain of the incarnation.” In the article, Ms. Cahill says, “Incarnation invites us into a radically different relationship with the world, a relationship where everything and everyone matters. This Advent, how would it challenge and shape my faith to accept such an invitation?”

God's incarnation in each created being, human and other-than-human – Duane Elgin asks if we are fundamentally biological or bio-cosmic. His answer begins with the conviction that, “in a living universe, our physical existence is permeated and sustained by an aliveness that is inseparable from the larger universe. Seeing ourselves as part of the unbroken fabric of creation awakens our sense of

connection with, and compassion for, the totality of life. We recognize our bodies as precious, biodegradable vehicles for acquiring ever-deepening experiences of aliveness.”

The most poignant reflection on this fourth moment which flows from the trust that each one has as an incarnation of an in-dwelling God came with an invitation to prayer. We were invited to pray in solidarity with the Sisters of Mercy in Whitby, North Yorkshire, who had just lost their third Sister to COVID-19 virus in ten days. We remembered with sadness and gratitude the lives of Sisters Mary Alphonsus, Mary Winifred and Mary Eileen who have now joined the community of Mercy in heaven.

All is One – from a simple circle of greenery marked with four candles to a living circle of humans and other-than-humans, the living Cosmic Advent Wreath gathers all the circles we form within the precious communion of all creation. Rooted in our rich traditions, this Advent time of expectation centres on the ever-unfolding incarnations of our compassionate and loving God in the ever-expanding universe and in the ever-flowing expressions of mercy alive among all beings. Despite the misery, degradation and suffering of this time, we find hope in the One who created us and who creates us, the One who invites us to be co-creators, and the One who gives us the courage and strength to go on.

Among the most precious gifts shared during the three regional gatherings was a new hymn, “Cosmic Advent”, composed, played, and sung by a Sister of Mercy from Samoa, Paula Anamani rsm. It gives a sense of the richness and beauty of this time in which Mercy flowed out to become itself a living Cosmic Advent Wreath:

Birth of Our Universe
God created with love
All is One in God’s love
All is One in God’s love

Birth of our Solar System
God created with love
All is One in God’s love
All is One in God’s love

Birth of Our Christ Jesus
God created with love
All is One in God’s love
All is One in God’s love

Our Birth in the whole
Cosmic Body of the Universe
God created with love
All is One in God’s love
All is One in God’s love

Christ of our Universe
Be our daily star
Come to the Manger of our hearts
With hope, peace, and love
All is one in God’s Love

Music and lyrics Paula Anamani rsm © 2020 Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand

References:

Bairbre Cahill, “[An Advent invitation: sit with the depth and power and pain of the incarnation,](https://www.irishcatholic.com/author/bairbrecahill/)” *The Irish Catholic*, 26 November 2020, accessed at <https://www.irishcatholic.com/author/bairbrecahill/>.

Duane Elgin, “Why We Need to Believe in a Living Universe,” HuffPost, 16 July 2011, accessed at https://www.huffpost.com/entry/living-universe_b_862220 or <https://spiritualcoretheory.com/why-we-need-to-believe-in-a-living-universe/>.

Suggested sites for tracking stars:

- ✓ StarTracker, accessed at <https://sites.google.com/site/pyopyostudioapp/>.
- ✓ Google Sky, accessed at <https://www.google.com/sky/>.
- ✓ SkyView, accessed at <https://www.terminaleleven.com/skyview/iphone/>.
- ✓ NASA App, accessed at <https://www.nasa.gov/nasaapp>.

—MGP Guiding Group

