



**MERCY  
GLOBAL  
PRESENCE**

## Contemplating the Cosmic Christ in a time of Global Turmoil

**Angela Reed rsm (MIA)**

It's hard not to be disheartened when we reflect on the many crises that we are faced with across the globe. These crises are intricately linked to the Degradation of Earth and the Displacement of Peoples. At the time of writing, Colleen Swain is representing Mercy International Association at the UN COP 25 Climate meeting being held in Madrid in an attempt to stand in solidarity and to advocate with those acknowledging that there is indeed a climate emergency.<sup>1</sup> Sadly, political will is lacking in regards to efforts to take major climate action and reduce carbon emissions which are having devastating impacts on earth and 'disproportionately affecting the people and communities globally who have contributed least to creating this planetary emergency'.<sup>2</sup>

This year we have also witnessed ongoing civil and political unrest in many countries throughout the world, including but not limited to Venezuela, Chile, Haiti, and Hong Kong. Serious conflicts continue to wage in Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq, Myanmar, South Sudan and Syria resulting in a huge number of fatalities, food insecurity and mass displacement of people.

The vastly unequal distribution of resources throughout the world continues to reduce many people to a life of poverty, with profit often being a priority over the rights and human dignity of people. Human rights abuses continue to be rampant throughout the world and the perpetrators, whether they are individuals or corporate entities, often operate with impunity. We have witnessed the persecution and even the death of human rights defenders, and have seen the ongoing objectification of people through human trafficking and other forms of bondage. Homelessness continues to be a global phenomenon where many are denied the human right to housing and often live in subhuman conditions.

The global turmoil described above is a consequence of oppressive systems that continue to marginalise, discriminate and oppress those rendered poor and powerless:

- Economic systems that value profit over people,
- Political systems that shut down human rights activists and opt for multinational contracts without the consent of its people,
- Quick Fix Technological systems that are destructive to our earth and continue to threaten its long term sustainability,
- Social systems that tolerate xenophobia, homophobia, sexism, racism, classism and other forms of marginalisation and discrimination.

This is a very disturbing reality and such a dismal picture can lead us to despair and to ask where the Incarnate God of the Cosmos is?

---

<sup>1</sup> Mercy's Focus at COP25 <https://www.mercyworld.org/newsroom/mercy-at-cop25/>

<sup>2</sup> The People's Demands for Climate Justice <https://www.peoplesdemands.org/#read-the-demands-section>

Theologian Matthew Fox in his ground breaking work over twenty years ago claimed that the Cosmic Christ is present wherever there is pain. The Cosmic Christ he claims, 'unites all this pain in the one divine heart, in the one divine- but wounded – body of the Christ which is the body of the universe'.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, in his book, 'The Universal Christ' Richard Rohr calls for an incarnational worldview. He claims,

An incarnational worldview is the only way we can reconcile our inner worlds with the outer one, unity with diversity, physical with spiritual, individual with corporate and divine with human.<sup>4</sup>

As people of Mercy and people of faith, we are challenged to both cry out against these oppressive systems and to contemplate the Cosmic Christ who dwells amongst us and fills us with hope.

In other writings, Rohr claims that the term 'cosmic Christ' reminds us that everything and everyone belongs. He argues therefore that 'the mystery of the incarnation means the divine indwelling in all of us. We're indeed the body of Christ. God's hope for humanity is that one day we will all recognize that the divine dwelling place is all of creation.'<sup>5</sup>

This of course has implications for our global justice work. As Eco-theologian Sallie McFague emphasizes

We are part and parcel of the web of life and exist in interdependence with all other beings, both human and nonhuman...We both depend on the web of life for our continued existence and in a special way we are responsible for it, for we alone know that life is interrelated and we alone know how to destroy it. It is an awesome –and unsettling- thought.<sup>6</sup>

So what do we do with this unsettling thought? McFague asks how would we act differently if we imagined the world to be the body of God rather than considering it to be as the tradition has, the realm of the Almighty King?<sup>7</sup>

If the entire universe, all that is and has been, is God's body then God acts in and through the incredibly complex physical and historical-cultural evolutionary process that began eons ago.<sup>8</sup> Our Mercy International Association vision statement invites us to witness to the sacredness of all creation by 'standing with the displaced, by modelling a world of welcome and inclusion and by being actively engaged in the protection of our Common Home.'<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Fox, Matthew. *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*. Collins Dove, Melbourne Australia 1988. 153

<sup>4</sup> Richard Rohr. *The Universal Christ*. SPCK Publishing, London, UK 2019. 14

<sup>5</sup> Heffern, Rich. An Interview with Fr Richard Rohr, 'The eternal Christ in the cosmic story' *National Catholic Reporter*, December 11, 2009 <https://www.ncroline.org/news/spirituality/eternal-christ-cosmic-story>

<sup>6</sup> McFague, Sallie. *Imaging a Theology of Nature: The World as God's Body*. In Charles Birch, William Eaken and Jay B. McDaniel (eds) *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches in Ecological Theology*. Orbis Books 1990

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Mercy International Association Vision Statement <https://www.mercyworld.org/about/vision-strategy/>