THE COSMIC LITURGY OF THE CHURCH CATHOLIC AND THE ETHOS OF EARTH-CARE

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One can imagine some sixteenth century scholarly detractor of Martin Luther complaining to a colleague about the "faddishness" of the Reformer. That detractor could be someone as sophisticated as an Erasmus. Such an eminent critic could easily observe: few of the great theologians of the Church have found the idea of justification by faith *everywhere* in the Scriptures, as Luther has been wont to do. Nor for a thousand years has the Church taught anything resembling Luther's prized and passionate rendering of the idea, "justification by faith *alone."* Hence, this imagined scholarly critic might easily conclude: Luther has become the captive of some alien spirit, call it the spirit of the untutored masses or the wiles of their fellow-traveling, popularizing teachers, who only seem to want to change Catholic Truth into some heresy pleasing to themselves.

The analogy is precise. In our time, scholarly detractors and other theological critics have confidently announced that the theology of the cosmos and environmental ethics represent *a fad.* that theologians and other church spokespersons who talk about the *cosmic* dimensions of the faith and about *care for the earth* have allegedly capitulated to some popular culture of "political correctness" or some alien popular faith, like "new age spirituality."

On the contrary, the theology of the cosmos and environmental ethics are as critical for us, in our time, as the theology of justification by faith alone was for Luther in his time. And, yes. The spiritual and social crises of *his* time — the bankruptcy of a piety and a public ethos that had celebrated justification by works — *did* drive Luther to the Scriptures with a fresh urgency. We would not have had the theological breakthroughs of the Reformation era, surely, were it not for the

spiritual and social crises of those times.

So for us today. Driven by the global spiritual and social crises of the environment in our time, some have been led by the Spirit to discover afresh the cosmic scope of biblical faith, and the biblical concern for care for the earth, awareness of which has been more or less eclipsed in modem times. I trace the story of that theological eclipse in my historical study of Christian theologies of nature, *The Travail of Nature: the Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985). Theological interest in the cosmos and care for the earth can be judged to be a fad only by those who have failed to see that that interest is predicated on a *fundamentum* of the classical theological tradition, to which numerous thoughtfill people of faith have attempted to return, driven by the spiritual and social threats posed by the late-twentieth-century, global environmental crisis.

Much has already been accomplished, in this respect, theologically and ethically. Once the Church is really ready to be tutored, many solid biblical and theological works in "ecological theology" and "environmental ethics" are at hand to shape the mind and the heart of the Church. But it is sobering to notice that works like my own programmatic essay, *Brother Earth: Nature, God, and Ecology in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1970), and numerous Church social statements, have been available for more than two decades. The impact of such works and such statements on the life of the Church appears to have been marginal, at best. Why?

Could it be that one of the reasons for the continuing eclipse of the cosmic in Christian life and thought in our time is rooted in the our *liturgical praxis*? While twentieth century liturgical scholars like Alexander Schmemann and theologians of Christian spirituality like Teilhard de Chardin have depicted the liturgy of the Church Catholic as a cosmic liturgy, their writings appear to have had little

substantive impact, in this respect, throughout the Church.

Nor has it always been salutary in recent years when local congregations have improvised liturgically on their own, in response to the environmental crisis. A large Episcopal Cathedral in the Midwest, for example, has taken to celebrating "St. Bernard's Day." The St. Bernard in question, however, is not the medieval luminary, but the popular canine. St. Bernard's Day, in the instance, turns out to be a day for the faithful in that parish to bring their dogs to church for a blessing.

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City has been much more theologically and liturgically sophisticated in this respect, with its lavish celebrations of the Day of St. Francis. This cathedral congregation seems to have taken earth-care with a real seriousness, too, as is evidenced by the church's various task forces geared to impact on the congregation's own impoverished urban environment. But even in this case, the liturgical activity itself appears to be problematic. Bringing a whole entourage of animals, large and small, into the Cathedral once year, accompanied typically by expensive "earth-music" offered by the likes of the Paul Winter Consort — including songs of the whales! — all this tends to suggest that that singular kind of liturgical event, whether done in the name of St. Bernard, St. Francis, or somebody else, *is* the cosmic liturgy of the Church Catholic.

Once-a-year celebrations of a day set aside to give thanks for the fruits of the earth, "Rogationtide," a festival which some earnest Protestant activists have been attempting to revive, seem to be even less promising, for the same reasons. Where is the cosmic dimension of the Church's worship the rest of the year?

The time is surely at hand to discover or to rediscover the cosmic liturgy of the Church Catholic and the ethos of earth-care that that liturgy entails: so that the cosmic roots of the classical liturgy can bear fruit, and thereby shape the life of

the faithful *every day* in this era of global environmental crisis, not just on yearly liturgical occasions.

Those roots are readily accessible, for anyone who has eyes to see. All we need is a liturgical praxis, in Word and Sacrament, that will allow those roots to grow and to flourish, for all to see. Consider what might happen to the ethos of the Church Catholic if large numbers of the faithful deeply experienced the cosmic dimensions of the Church's own liturgy on a regular basis.

I The Cosmic Liturgy as Experience

Consider first the praxis of Baptism and Eucharist, already given with the liturgy of the Church Catholic, but which now must be celebrated self-consciously as a manifestation of the ministrations of the cosmic Christ, illuminated by a theology of the cosmic Word. From among the many liturgical expressions of those sacraments, past and present, that readily merit our attention, two particular rites commend themselves, both accessible in a representative contemporary form, in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978).

To describe how these rites are to be rightly celebrated, we must first identify a theological assumption and then its christogical corollary. This is the assumption. Baptism and Eucharist are indeed to be understood as *Visible Words,* as Robert Jenson suggests in his study with that title (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), but only if the Word is interpreted as the cosmic Logos made flesh, in the sense of John 1:1 and 1:14, only if the Word is interpreted as the immanent Principle or Matrix of all things, in the sense of Colossians 1:15ff. All too often the Augustinian sacramental affirmation, taken up by Jenson, has, by default, if not by intention, been projected in Platonizing terms: with the assumption that the Word that is made visible in the sacraments is the *Word of doctrine.* That critical

shift of nuance already was underway in the sixteenth century in the appropriation of Martin Luther's sacramental theology by his ardent champion, Philipp Melanchthon. As a result, for some communions, the sacraments have tended to become *illustrations of an idea,* dispensations announcing the unmerited Grace of God, surely, but basically understood to have been instituted by God for the sake of simple, even illiterate souls in order to *teach* them about what God has revealed more directly in His written Word, in immediate revelations to the soul, or by the dogmatic authority of the Church. So we must state resolutely and affirmatively at the outset that the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, as "visible Words," are indeed sacraments of *the real presence of the cosmic Logos made flesh.*

Then the corollary of the theological assumption. This has to do with what might sound like an obscure point in sacramental theology. But it is not. It goes to the heart of the matter. We must question those theologians who minimize Martin Luther's theology of the ubiquity of the risen Christ. This teaching has been something of an embarrassment to even the most enthusiastic of Luther's followers. It has scandalized many others.

To those theologians who pass by Luther's teaching about the ubiquity of the risen Christ with a respectful silence, as well as to those who reject this teaching out of hand, we must say: do you understand Luther's theology of the immanence of God in the creation in the first place? Luther has a highly sophisticated rendering of the Divine immanence in the whole creation, in dialectical terms, by means of his maximization of spatial pronouns — as evidenced, for example, in the often cited phrase, "in, with, and under." Further, Luther understands space, paradoxically: first and foremost as *God's space,* a theological fundamental that Karl Barth may well have learned from Luther even as Barth was at the same time rejecting Luther's sacramental theology in other ways. Luther's theological depiction of space is first and foremost a description of *God's* space, then the

world's. So Luther can readily suggest that the whole of the Godhead is present in the baby on Mary's lap. He can make the same affirmation about a grain of wheat! God's space is not limited by the space of this world. On the contrary, God's space envelops, dwarfs, indwells, overwhelms, and caresses the space of this world.

Luther's sense of God's immediate presence in the creation has been given dramatic expression in our time by Juergen Moltmann, with the latter's statement that God creates the cosmos *within* the Divine Being. For Moltmann, God's presence envelops and permeates the world. On the other hand, Luther was more dialectical than Moltmann. Luther would *also* have said "outside." For Luther, no single spatial preposition, including "within," can describe the power and the mystery and the radical immediacy of the Divine presence. For similar reasons, Luther would have rejected, as simplistic and undialectical, the assertion by theologians like Sally MacFague, in our time, that the cosmos *is* God's body. For Luther, God's glory is too great and God's immediacy in all things is too mysterious to allow such a one-dimensional, literalizing theological predication.

Further, when Luther states, concerning the ascension of the risen Lord to the right hand of the Father, that "the right hand of God is everywhere" (*dextera Dei ubique est*), the Reformer is merely (!) giving his rich theology of the Divine immanence what is for him an appropriate christological concreteness. Since God the Father, for Luther, is, as a matter of course, "in, with, and under" all things, so is the ascended Son of God. This christological qualification of the Divine immanence then makes it possible for Luther to develop his rich sacramental theology. The same God who was and is in, with, and under all things — *finitum capax infinitum* - is also fully present in the Child on the lap of Mary, for Luther, and therefore also fully present in the waters of Baptism and in the bread and the wine of the Eucharist, at all times and in all places, and so known by the faithful, whenever those sacraments are administered according to the self-same cosmic

Word.

Why, then, we must ask theologians who back away from this cosmic theology of Luther, are you so embarrassed or even scandalized by the doctrine of the ubiquity of the risen Christ? Is not the risen Christ, who, as St. Paul teaches reigns throughout the cosmos (I Corinthians 15, Colossians 1) really present at any time and any place in Baptism and Eucharist? Is He not really present, as he promised, where ever two or three are gathered in His Name? And is this not the same Christ who appeared to Mary at the tomb and Thomas behind closed doors?

In light of these considerations, the theological burden of the proof would seem to rest squarely on the shoulders of those who would minimize or reject Luther's theology of the ubiquity of the risen and ascended Christ. In this respect, as in many others, Luther's theological affirmations seem to have been not only appropriate, but commendable interpretations of the witness of Holy Scripture. It remains, then, to explore the rich and deep connections between this theology of the cosmic Word and the liturgical praxis of Baptism and Eucharist.

The ancient Church testified to the cosmic meanings of Baptism in numerous ways, especially in the architecture of baptistries. Often those free-standing structures were designed to image-forth the whole cosmos, with domed ceilings for example, representing the heavens. Their octagonal shapes, moreover, told the story of the universal history of salvation, for all who had eyes to see. The "eighth day" of creation, was, for the classical Christian mind, the Day of the resurrection, the restoration and the perfection of the whole creation, first shaped by the Creator through a history of seven days. Recent church architecture has tended, properly, to move in the direction of restoring that kind of cosmic symbolism for the baptismal font, through the introduction of living waters in some magnitude, by the incorporation of cosmic imagery on the font and its setting, and by the placement of fonts near or at the center of the public liturgical

action. But generally, it would appear, those suggestive architectural expressions have not been maximized as they might have been in any ecumenically consistent fashion.

But what cannot be accomplished in structures that cannot be rebuilt, or instituted in new structures, for all manner of architectural and financial reasons, can surely be accomplished in the baptismal rite itself, with the use of ample water and with a baptismal prayer of cosmic amplitude, and with other appropriate liturgical enactments, such as enhanced musical settings.

This is the celebratory baptismal prayer offered in *the Lutheran Book of Worship.* Notwithstanding certain limitations, in particular its muted eschatological witness, it is a powerfully suggestive cosmic prayer:

> Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father: We give you thanks, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and you created heaven and earth. By the gift of water you nourish and sustain us and all living things.
>
> By the waters of the flood you condemned the wicked and saved those whom you had chosen, Noah and his family. You led Israel by the pillar of cloud and fire through the sea, out of slavery into the freedom of the promised land. In the waters of the Jordan your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Spirit. By the baptism of his own death and resurrection your beloved Son has set us free from bondage to sin and death, and has opened the way to the joy and freedom of everlasting life. He made water a sign of the kingdom and of cleansing and rebirth. In obedience to his command, we make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit
>
> Pour out your Holy Spirit, so that those who are here baptized may be given new life. Wash away the sin of all those who are cleansed by this water and bring them forth as inheritors of your glorious kingdom.

To you be given praise and honor and worship through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

This prayer tells "the mighty acts of God" in impressive Trinitarian terms. Unfortunately, however, it understates *the eschatological promise for the renewal of all things,* given with Baptism. This theme: that the one who is baptized is united with the death and resurrection of the One who will come again to make all things new. Reference could easily have been made in this prayer to the River of the City of God, set in the midst of the New Heavens and the New Earth, proclaimed by the Book of Revelation (22:1-2). Still, this prayer does suggestively profess the fullness of the mighty acts of God in creation, redemption, and consummation, culminating with its — muted, but evident - witness to the glorious Kingdom of God that is yet to be fully realized.

Anecdotal evidence suggests, sadly, that even in communions that do have access to baptismal prayers of such cosmic plenitude, the use of such prayers is minimized - often for reasons of "saving time." Thereby the salvation of the One who has saved all of time is minimized and marginalized, in favor of other a-theological and mundane concerns. Would that the Church of our time could hearken back to the days of the great bronze-based pools of water placed centrally in the ancient temple of the Hebrew people, where issues of chaos and cosmos, nonbeing and being, death and life, were evidently at stake. Would that Church musicians today could be encouraged to create dramatic works for the sake of Baptismal liturgies, giving expression to the cosmic plenitude of the death and resurrection of Christ: works that tell of cacaphonic thunder and lightning, reminiscent of Psalm 29, and also of the halcyon harmonies of the whole creation, reminiscent of Psalm 104. Would that priests and pastors could have the liturgical imagination to find ways to draw on such creations, precisely in order to - save time.

A similar, expansive use of the catholic imagination, in the name of the cosmic Word of God, should be brought to bear on the Church's eucharistic celebrations in these times of environmental crisis. As Robert Jenson, Gordon Lathrop, and others have convincingly argued, when our Lord said "do this" with reference to the institution of the Eucharist, He meant what He said, which was: to give thanks. Some churches have opted, in contrast, merely for the repetition of "the words of institution," as the essence of the spoken eucharistic rite. However much that liturgical truncation may have been motivated by a commitment to evangelical simplicity, it has also been sustained, surely, by the drive to "save time" — because "time is money" — that has dominated bourgeois Christianity in the modern West. On the contrary, these times require something counter-cultural, and much more biblical: taking the time to give thanks, as our Lord commanded us to do.

The Great Prayer Thanksgiving, given a place of prominence in numerous ecumenical liturgies in our time, is an appropriate and urgently needed liturgical matrix. Like the celebratory Baptismal prayer we have already considered, the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving is a narration of the mighty acts of God, beginning with creation, focusing on redemption — where "the words of institution" have their fitting and irreplaceable place — and coming to rest in the vision of the consummation of all things which is yet to come. So the Great Thanksgiving in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* begins:

> Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father: Endless is your mercy and eternal is your reign. You have filled all creation with light and life; heaven and earth are full of your glory.

This recapitulates the witness of Genesis 1, which is further adumbrated in Psalm 104, and brought to christological completion in Colossians l:15ff. and Revelation 21: that the God of this Holy Meal is the One who, from the very

beginning, had a purpose for all things, not just humankind, and that this God is indeed in, with, and under all things, and will one day bring all things to fulfillment in the day of the new heavens and the new earth.

Then follows the narration of the history of salvation, beginning with Abraham and coming to fulfillment "at this the end of all the ages," in the Son sent by the Father, who proclaimed the Kingdom of God and instituted His Holy Meal. This Son is further identified, eschatologically, as the One who will come in power "to share with us the great and promised feast," when He comes again "as victorious Lord of all." These liturgical meanings reflect the testimony of Colossians and Revelation, that the Lord who is Host at this banquet is the very Lord who, as Lord of lords and King of kings, will come again to judge the world in righteousness and will inaugurate the great and eternal cosmic Day of Shalom, when God will finally be all in all.

The Lord who is Host at this eucharistic feast, then, is the Lord of all, the *Pantokrater,* in whom, and by whom all things consist. I have explored the meanings given in this kind of cosmic understanding of Jesus Christ in my essay, "Toward a Christology of Nature" (*dialog*, 34:4 [fall 1995], pp. 270-280).

Seen from this angle of vision, traditional reflection about the real presence of Christ in the elements can both be reaffirmed and transvalued, cosmically. Of course, from the context of the Catholic faith, the crucified and risen Lord is *truly and really present*, in, with, and under the eucharistic elements. But that is not all, by any means.

At this point we can learn from one of the early testimonies of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformer, Huldrich Zwingli. In rejecting what he then had received as the normative Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation of the eucharistic elements, Zwingli said, in effect: no, it is not the elements, it is *the*

people gathered who are transubstantiated into the Body of Christ. While holding to the witness of the Church Catholic about the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements, it is certainly possible and indeed, in a certain sense, mandatory, biblically speaking, also to teach what Zwingli taught, that the crucified and risen Christ is truly present, embodied, in the company of the faithful who gather around the eucharistic Table in order to lift up the bread and the wine in thanksgiving and to receive those elements in return as the true and real Body and Blood of Christ. St. Paul's theology of the Church as the veritable and visible Body of Christ mandates that we at least say this much about the real presence of Christ in the people of Christ, so that we might fittingly "discern the Body." (cf. I Corinthians 11:29)

With eyes of faith thus illuminated, one can further see the figure of the crucified and risen Christ in, with, and under the liturgical actions of the priestly celebrant, in particular, the one who is called by God to offer the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving and to administer the bread and the wine with Christ-like love to the faithful gathered around the Table.

With this vision of the fullness of the cosmic Christ, really present in bread and wine, offered and distributed, and really present in people singing and praying and in priestly ministrations, it is possible to witness, in faith and hope, a kind of *massive unfolding and overflowing revelation of the glory of the ubiquitous Christ,* beginning with the elements at the center of ever-expanding concentric circles *of Divine energy* — like ripples in a smooth pond, driven by a single, centric entrance of a new reality into the whole interrelated universal system — flowing from the elements to the people, then encompassing the whole house or the temple where the people have gathered, and, still more, ever expanding to the whole earth and thence to the entire cosmos: so that the faithful participants in this eucharistic feast in some measure experience the great cosmic banquet yet to come, when God will indeed be all in all.

As we witness this vision of the cosmic Word embodied in the sacramental praxis of the Church, we may take it for granted that the architectural and artistic setting of these sacraments will enhance rather than inhibit the liturgical celebration. We have already had occasion to observe how important the right kind of architectural setting is for the celebration of Baptism in accord with the cosmic Word. This is all the more the case for that sacrament which is the culminating center of the Church's sacramental ministries, the Eucharist.

Great liturgical music that lifts up the cosmic universality of the Eucharist is readily available, even in the smallest of parish settings. Great liturgical iconography and architecture that serves and elaborates the cosmic universality of the Eucharist is often more difficult to put in place, for a variety of typically pragmatic reasons. But this should be the goal: for a congregation to live in a church house which attests the multicultural dimensions of the human family and the multidimensional aspects of the cosmos, wild nature, cultivated nature, and fabricated nature, and which does not mask those riches by artificial or so-called "supernatural" esthetic elaborations. This should be the vision: the bread and the wine on the Table are, for those eucharistic moments, positioned *at the center of the cosmos*, and the Divine Energies of the crucified and risen cosmic Christ, in whom all things consist, radiate from that center to touch peoples of every nation, male and female, Jew and Greek, slave and free, and indeed every dimension of the cosmos.

To this end, those who lead the liturgies of the people should make every effort to find imaginative ways to enhance the organic and physical textures of the worship space, as well as to give space for various forms of iconography, both classical and contemporary. Given the global scope of human civilization today, moreover, those artistic and architectural dimensions of the worship space can fittingly be enhanced by motifs from many cultures, in appropriate ways. Likewise, given the cosmic scope of human experience today, symbolized by the

human moon-walk and the constant scientific probes of the galaxies, artists who serve the Church should be encouraged to find ways to give testimony to the glories of our multi-galactic universe, as well as to the beauties of the good earth, nearer at hand.

In this respect, *the move away from the hierarchical motifs of the gothic in our time probably needs to be sustained,* at least until the time when the cosmic liturgy of the Church Catholic has been much more extensively ritualized in practice than it is at the present. For all their beauties and their visual celebrations of the creation, the motifs of the gothic typically lead the souls of the faithfill to rise above the rich diversities of this material and cultural world in the direction of union with the purely undifferentiated spiritual One above. Whether post-gothic structures such as the Crystal Cathedral in California that allow visions of a polluted earth and a cosmos groaning in travail, and also give glimpses of the whole creation transfigured in glory — attested beautifully by the near gardens and the distant mountains — should be the preferred architectural direction of the future is another question, which probably needs to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

That the eucharistic life of the Church should overflow beyond the bounds of the house or the temple, however, is clear, not only in terms of the ministries of the people, but also in terms of the witness of the temple and the temple grounds. Inner city churches, in particular, should seek to find ways to demonstrate the promise of the Gospel by the cultivation of flowers and trees and gardens, and, wherever possible, by the introduction of fountains and hidden, shaded walkways, where the homeless and the disenfranchised can find some secure moments of rest and the birds of the air can find some safe places to nest. Icons of urban elegance, moreover, perchance a large polished brass crucifix in the simple, but transfixing style of a Brancusi, should also be given liturgical prominence, as an affirmation of the renewal of all things through the mission of

the cosmic Christ, a renewal which will include the world of fabricated nature as well as cultivated and wild nature. All this is a testimony to the renewal of the whole cosmos celebrated in Word and Sacrament.

II. The Cosmic Liturgy as Ethos

Theologians and other Church leaders in pragmatic, practical, bottom-line America do not readily find themselves attuned to theological reflections about the liturgy like these, especially insofar as such reflections come to focus on the sacramental life of the Church. Theologically informed American Christians may wistfully refer to the cosmic insights of Eastern Christianity, as exemplified by an Alexander Schmemann. They may express admiration for the cosmic spirituality of a Teilhard de Chardin and even for his witness to the cosmic liturgy of the Church Catholic. But the wistfulness and the admiration, typically, soon give way to the pragmatism. The real spiritual business of the day, for many American Christians, is ethics. Which, in turn, for the same theologically informed Americans, characteristically means either attending to the communal inculcation of values (character ethics) or lifting up a prophetic call for social change, sparked by the Christian Gospel of liberation (political ethics).

What those who follow the pragmatic way characteristically miss, however, is that neither the communal inculcation of values nor the prophetic proclamation of justice emerges *ex nihilo.* Nor can either way be sustained *ex nihilo.* This is because the mission of the Church is not first and foremost *doing.* The mission of the Church is first and foremost *being,* a case which I argued more than three decades ago and which still needs to be argued resolutely (see my essay, "The Mission of the Church: Reflections Along the Way" (*Lutheran Quarterly,* 23:4 [November 1971], pp. 366-387). The doing of the Church flows from the being of the Church. The works of the Church flow from the Grace given to the Church.

This is why the foregoing explorations of the cosmic liturgy of the Church Catholic are so critically important for the life of the Church in this era of global environmental crisis. For, *liturgy is the being of the Church.* Liturgy is, thereby, the Church's mode of identity-formation. This point has been made by many different phenomenologists of religion, past and present. It is a truism of the Church's life that is too often overlooked, especially in pragmatic America.

Erik Erickson, for one, argued, from the perspective of developmental psychology, that ritual is the mode of identity-formation. The parent, for example, who enters the room where the infant has just awakened and who smiles at the infant, morning after morning, day after day, is engaging in a ritual that inculcates what Erickson called "basic trust." The infant does not develop basic trust, according to Erickson, apart from such rituals. So, all the more so, with the cosmic liturgy of the Church Catholic: this is the way the Church inculcates the ethos of cosmic awareness and of cosmic responsibility in its members. Every viable Christian environmental ethic presupposes the generative matrix of the cosmic liturgy of the Church Catholic.

The Letter to the Ephesians takes this kind of witness for granted. It assumes that God the Father is the One who is "above all and through all and in all" (4:6) and that the Son of this cosmic Father is the One in whom "all things," things on heaven and things on earth, are gathered up.(l: 10) It further assumes that this cosmic ministry of God the Father and the Son, is magnified and celebrated by the strangers and sojourners called together from every nation (2:19) and inspired by the Spirit of the same God, in one exuberant moment of thanksgiving:

> Be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (5:18-20)

That, in broad biblical compass, is *the experience of the liturgy.*

With that experience is given *the ethos of the liturgy.* The Church is called to "walk worthy of the vocation" to which it has been called (4:1), to "put on a new nature." (4:24), inspired by the selfsame Spirit of God.(cf. 4:3). This the Church accomplishes by *imitating* what it has been given by God through Christ:

> Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (5:1-2).

This is how the experience of the liturgy is at once the ethos of the liturgy. What is given to experience also transforms the lives of those who have been called together to experience what has been given. *Liturgical imitation is the matrix of ethics.*

With this angle of vision, inspired by the Letter to the Ephesians, we can more particularly imagine the cosmic liturgical ethos of the Church Catholic taking shape in the lives of the faithful in two ways, befitting the gifts of Grace and the works of Grace: *contemplation and caring.* The Church first celebrates the cosmic ministry of the triune God and then imitates that cosmic ministry, in appropriate ways, by caring for the earth and all its inhabitants (see further Ephesians 2:8-10). In this way the cosmic ethos of the Church's liturgy gives birth to an ethic of *Loving Nature,* the title of what is perhaps the single best book on environmental ethics now available, by James A Nash *(Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991).

This is a schematic way of identifying that ethic, in its contemplative and caring moments. The ethic of loving nature, given birth by the cosmic ethos of the Church's liturgy, can be said to be both *Franciscan and Benedictine,* following here the suggestive insights of the great French ecologist of this century, Rene Dubos. St. Francis stood back from the wonders of nature, awestruck, and contemplated them, as revelations of the glory of God. This he

expressed most memorably in his great Canticle to the Sun. St. Francis also stood back from the wonders of Grace, awestruck, and contemplated them in the person of the impoverished Son of God, come to redeem all creatures. This vision Francis expressed most memorably in a great act of liturgical imagination: he set up the eucharistic Table in the midst of the animals of the barn, on the top of a mountain, and celebrated Mass there, on Christmas Eve. In all this, as anyone who knows anything about the historical Francis will readily acknowledge, Francis, the great lover of nature, made special and consistent efforts throughout his ministry to reach out to the poor of the earth, whom, he believed, were specially beloved by the impoverished Christ.

St. Benedict launched a revolutionary monastic movement whose life was centered in the cosmic liturgy of the Church Catholic. That movement was also inspired by a vision of responsible labor — *ora et labora.* In its most authentic expressions, the Benedictine movement consistently championed what Dubos called an ethic of "creative intervention in the earth." The Benedictine ethos was one of *cooperation with nature, not exploitation,* for the sake of building a sustainable and just human community, situated harmoniously in its larger natural milieu. One can readily imagine a Benedictine monastery involved in sustainable agriculture, in the invention of humanizing technological and architectural innovations, and in the sharing of the fruits of the earth with the poor.

Such is the shape of an environmental ethic of earth-care bom of the ethos of the cosmic liturgy of the Church Catholic. It is an ethic of love for the entire cosmos, especially for the earth and its inhabitants. It is an ethic of contemplation and caring that inspires all the baptized to imitate the love of God for all things, as the baptized experience the cosmic liturgy of the Church Catholic, devotedly giving thanks at the center of the universe: at the Table of the cosmic Christ, who together with the Father, in the power of the Spirit, is in, with, and under all things and who will one day come again to usher in the glorious new heavens and new earth, when all things will be made new and when God will be all in all.

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Wellesley, Massachusetts 02181

Dear Paul:

I am so grateful to you for your willingness to step into an important slot at the Upper New York Synod convention this year. It is desperately short notice, and while I have no question about your ability to "deliver the goods" in a subject area where you have given considerable study and attention -------- it's just that I feel rather sheepish in coming to you on such short notice.

Now some background. The original request from the Executive Board to the synod staff was to prepare a convention with a principle address by a New Testament scholar in the field of evangelism. That request dated back to the fall of 1976. At the February, 1977 Executive Board meeting there was strong sentiment to drop this proposed emphasis and pick up the issue of ecological and energy concerns. This is understandable considering the scare headlines and the scary situation in all of western New York the previous few weeks. So the Board voted to switch the principle speaker emphasis.

As I indicated in my telephone conversation with you yesterday, I was extremely upset that one of the next actions of the Board at that very meeting was to defeat a motion by one of the members that one meal at the convention (even a lunch!) be meatless. The defeat of that motion was preceded by some rather "heavy" comments. A similar motion was defeated last year by the Board.

Therefore, I am concerned that our good Lutheran folk in Upper New York not get the notion (apparently some of them have) that one can neatly separate "theology" from hard life choices.

For being with us on June 5-6 I would like to propose an honorarium of $300 with all expenses, of course, paid. If this is below your normal scale, don't be shy about letting me know, and I'll adjust it appropriately.

The only agenda items at our convention prior to your presentation on Sunday evening will be nominations from the floor and appointment of convention committees. This suggests an 8:00 p.m. June 5 starting time, concluding at 9:00 p.m. including a short period of discussion from the floor. On Monday, June 6th it looks as if we'll be starting with you rather close to 9:00 a.m. and concluding one hour later. You will have no convention responsibilities

May II. 1977

Dear Ed.

I am looking forward to being with you June 5 and 6. The honorarium is fine. I'll let you know about my arrival time soon.

In the meantime, I assume that you'll not have trouble finding a stack of LCA Social Ministry booklets on the Human Crisis in Ecology and a batch of LCA social statements by the same name.

Cordially,

P.S. I'm working on the gloss photos now ..

Edward Kerseen Perry
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