

## *A Larger Love – Source of Hope.*

*Madeline Duckett RSM*



**“Where do we find a love big enough for our outrage and sorrow?”**<sup>i</sup> This question was one of many that opened us into the May zoom meditation together! The words have stayed with me over the month, gestating into something soul nourishing and expanding into this month’s reflection. Where **do** we find a love large enough to hold all the pain, suffering, outrage, anger, sorrow, grief, fear and, at the core of it, intense vulnerability?

The media often pours fuel onto the fire of our own already painful personal feelings by its constant focus on disaster, violence, suffering people and in general, what seems wrong with the world. This can draw us further into a spiral of what is wrong with **us**, with others, with systems of which we are a part, as well as with the world at large, perhaps engendering blame.

Where do we find a love big enough to contain and transform all of this into something life-giving, meaningful and hope inspiring? Over recent weeks an answer to this question slowly rose from within - simply, gently and with a sense of rightness about it. The answer that surfaced was that we do not **find** a love large and powerful enough to withstand all evidence to the contrary, rather **IT FINDS US!** Or more precisely, we wake up and discover that we are **IN IT** already and are one with **IT** without recognising it! In heightened moments of consciousness, we can be gifted with SEEING that there is a larger spirit, dynamic or purpose at work than often seems or feels to be the case when we are caught up in darkness and pain.

The seasons both of nature and of the Christian Church’s liturgical year can act as pointers to a larger seeing. The month of June, in our part of the world at least, leads us to watch the rich colourful beauty of autumn slowly giving way to winter sparseness and bareness. We can feel loss and sadness, even bareness of soul ourselves even as we feel with nature’s increasing denudation. And further, as we approach the winter solstice, the centre-point of the year, we are aware of long hours of sunshine slowly letting go into increasing darkness.



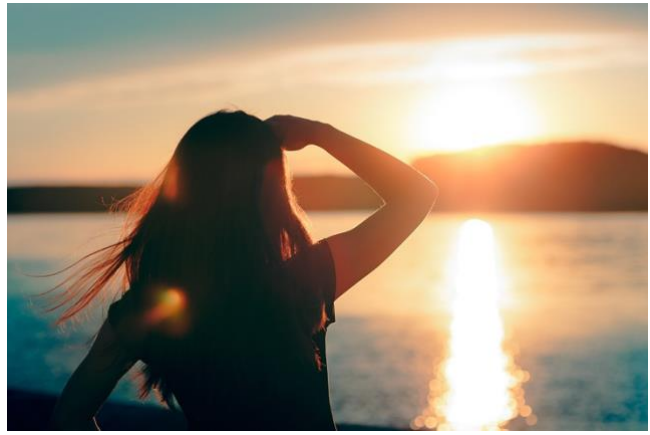
The growing darkness can exacerbate our own inner darkness. Along with nature herself, we must simply trust that it is not the end of the light. With nature, we entrust our painful letting goes to the cycle of the seasons, sensing that there is something more at work...something larger than our own small experience. We know from experience that something larger IS at work in the descending darkness and growing bareness. Nature urges us too to simply let go into it.

As well as the outer seasons, the Christian liturgical seasons at this time add a faith dimension to the natural processes of earth's turning seasons. In this post Easter time, we rejoice in a belief in life beyond pain, betrayal and loss of everything familiar and known. In this season we are invited to let go of our own experience of suffering and loss, and call upon that unseen, believed in force which is larger and wiser than what seems on the surface or is felt on the inside. We are invited to trust that it is but a prelude to something more.

Then Pentecost smashes into our liturgy, coming upon us with a Spirit fire that sears into our souls to cauterize our wounds of hopelessness and despair. It both cauterizes and energises us to see and know within our bone-weary, hope-depleted selves that hopelessness is not the end of the story. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the Spirit fires us to know assuredly that there is more...that we ARE more than was ever dreamed. We may even sense that we are now glowing and radiant with a Divine inner fire that will not give up or give in to sadness, loss, anger, pain, or anything else. It plants hope where there was despair, joy where there was only sadness and an interior peace that cannot be extinguished no matter what external circumstances arise. The great Francis of Assisi testifies to this as he lives into and from the greatest poverty of life and later, the excruciating pain of stigmata existence. Ettie Hillesum also speaks clearly of a larger-than-the-suffering-around-her seeing. She speaks a message of peace and beauty in the midst of imprisonment and the prospect of a gas chamber end. It is this Spirit of life in and beyond suffering and death that can act as the lodestone of all else that may be happening in our lives and in the larger world.

Finally, the liturgical feast of the Sacred Heart arrives in June to capture and focus all of this in an image that is initially personal and devotional but which through the written experience of Teilhard de Chardin becomes something much more. Through his sharing of his mystical experience, the devotional image of the human Jesus pointing to his heart of flesh bursts out of its tidy, manageable, picture frame and becomes the throbbing, beating heart of a universe on fire with Divine Love. This fire is the "larger Love" which was the starting point for this reflection.

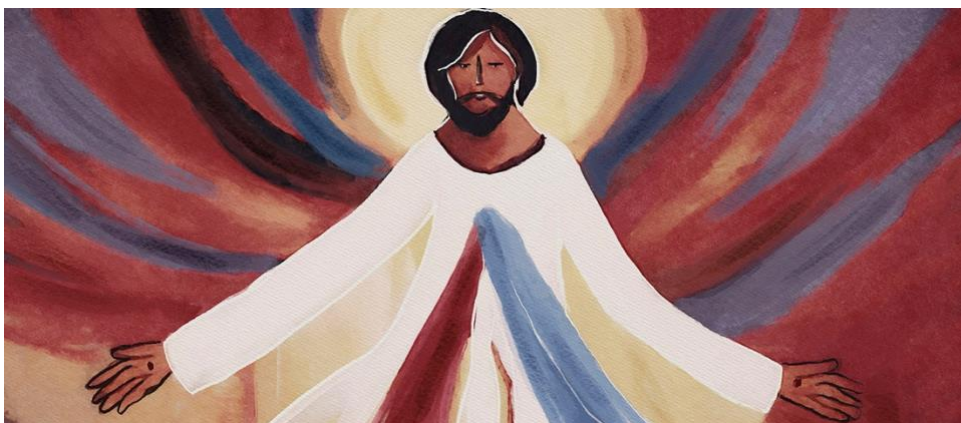
This Larger Love is within us, as well as everywhere around us, though we usually are oblivious to its presence. It dwells within, in our centre of centres if we dare to go deeply enough inside to our heart of hearts. In this centre place we can discover that "purity of heart" that can "see God"<sup>ii</sup> and which is the very "threshold of the kingdom of God".<sup>iii</sup> This purity of heart is often refined through suffering and by continual seeking



of the largesse of Divine Love hidden beyond human categories and reckonings. In this centre of centres we can grow to recognise the Omega Centre of which Teilhard speaks and which he came to describe as "the principle of cosmic wholeness and unity"<sup>iv</sup> towards which all things are moving.

In this centre of centres within ourselves we can sink deeper and deeper into a Love that can hold our disparate parts, our deepest griefs, our righteous (or not so righteous) anger. We are invited by our very pain to fall into the vastness of the Larger Love beyond ordinary sight and remain there day by day, hour by hour, suffering by suffering. In our CEN time we do this not only for ourselves but with and for our suffering world as well. We do so, intending to draw all into the unitive vastness of that Love that can transform all into itself and release hope into all situations. Here we may slowly come to know the reason and meaning for our trials and losses as Julian of Norwich did when she realised after fifteen years of searching that "love was his meaning...hold yourself therein and you shall know and learn more..."<sup>v</sup>

Let us "hold ourselves" in this Larger Love at the centre of all suffering and learn more about this profound source of hope...for ourselves and for our world.



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<sup>i</sup> Richard Rohr, *The Tears of Things*, <https://www.youtube.com>

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ii Matthew 5:8

iii Bruno Barnhard, *The Second Simplicity*, Paulist Press: NY 1999. p 30

iv Ilia Delio, *The Not Yet God*, Orbis Books: NY2023 p.34-35

v Julian of Norwich, *Revelation of Love*, Trans. John Skinner, Image Books: NY. London. 1996 p.180