



Living Spirituality Connections
Resources for spiritual journeys

Newsletter Summer 2022

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Introduction

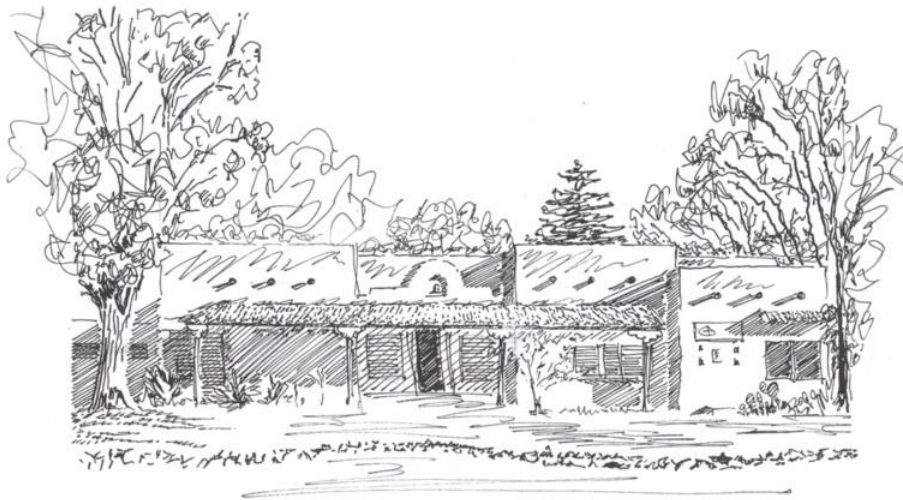
By Petra Griffiths, Newsletter Editor.

In this newsletter we begin with some contemplative inputs on the root of violence (Richard Rohr) and how a deep engagement with our heart can enable us to engage with conflict in helpful ways (Louise Livingstone). We then look at the importance of recognising the justice aspects that we need to commit to when looking at how to change our practical and spiritual approaches to the climate and biodiversity crises (Petra Griffiths). Alice Codner then challenges the idea of Creation Care and moves us towards the inter-connectedness of all life. Michael Lerner addresses the multiple crises the world faces as a wake-up call and a prompt towards a planetary ethos.

Linda Courage reports on the experiences and benefits people drew from participating in **An Artist's Rule online course**, which will be run again starting in November. Ivan Khovacs speaks of the language of Resurrection as a language of abundance and the continuing presence of Christ with us through the Holy Spirit. We conclude with Alice Codner's refreshing poem **Talking about God**.

The Root of Violence

By Richard Rohr



Center for Action and Contemplation, Albuquerque

The root of violence is *the illusion of separation*—from God, from Being itself, and from being one with everyone and everything. When we don't know we are connected, we will invariably resort to some form of violence to get the dignity and power we lack. Contemplation of the gospel message gradually trains us not to make so much of differences, but to return to who we are—our True Selves in God—which is always beyond any nationality, religion, skin colour, gender, sexuality, or any other possible labels. In fact, we finally can see that those are always and only commercial labels, covering the rich product underneath.

When we can become little enough, naked enough, and honest enough, then we will ironically find that we are more than enough. At this place of poverty and freedom, we have nothing to prove and nothing to protect. Here we can connect with everything and everyone. Everything belongs. This cuts violence at its very roots, before there is even a basis for fear or greed—the things that usually cause us to be angry, suspicious, and violent.

To be clear, it is inconceivable that a true Christian would be racist, anti-Semitic, xenophobic, homophobic, or bigoted toward any group or individual, especially toward the

poor and vulnerable, which seems to be an acceptable American prejudice. To end the cycle of violence, our actions must flow from our authentic identity as Love.

One of the reasons I founded the Center for Action and Contemplation was to give activists some grounding in spirituality so they could continue working for social change, but *from a stance much different than vengeance, ideology, or willpower pressing against willpower*. Most activists I knew loved Gandhi's and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s teachings on nonviolence. But it became clear to me that many of them had only an intellectual appreciation rather than a participation in the much deeper mystery. The ego was still in charge, and I often saw people creating victims of others who were not like them. It was still a power game, not the science of love that Jesus taught us.

When we begin by connecting with our inner experience of communion rather than separation, our actions can become pure, clear, and firm. This kind of action, rooted in one's True Self, comes from a deeper knowing of what is real, good, true, and beautiful, beyond labels and dualistic judgments of right or wrong. From this place, our energy is positive and has the most potential to create change for the good. This stance is precisely what we mean by "being in prayer." We must pray "unceasingly" to maintain this posture. It is a lifelong process. We wait in prayer, but we don't wait for absolutely perfect motivation or we will never act. Radical union with God and neighbour should be our starting place, not private perfection.

1 May 2022, adapted from Richard Rohr and Thomas Keating, **Healing Our Violence through the Journey of Centering Prayer** (Cincinnati, OH: Saint Anthony Messenger Press, 2002), CD. Copyright © 2022 by CAC. Used by permission of CAC. All rights reserved worldwide. Thank you to the Center for Action and Contemplation for permission to make this material available here.

Franciscan **Richard Rohr** is founder of the Center for Action and contemplation in New Mexico. He is the author of many books. You can sign up for daily meditations from the Center here: <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/> (donations to CAC requested)

How can the thought of the heart offer effective ways of engaging with conflict? An imaginal and reflexive study.

By Louise Livingstone

This study explores the idea that heart knowing is a vitally important human capability which has, over the course of many hundreds of years, been divorced from, and rendered

subservient to, knowledge about the world as generated through the brain (understood in modern times as the seat of knowledge and rational thinking). Suggesting that the latter move not only carries the potential to cause conflict, but in addition prevents contemporary society from engaging in creative ways with conflict, my research suggests that there is room for, and a growing need to, reconsider conflict and our interactions with conflict situations, through a more expansive, heart-centred lens.



While the heart and benevolent heart qualities such as love, kindness, non-judgment and compassion are often alluded to within conflict literature, the practical role that the heart could play is consistently, and frustratingly, left unaddressed. I suggest that this issue is of key importance, and aim to show that while people in contemporary society might intuitively or unconsciously be aware that heart knowing may be helpful to navigate the complexities of daily life, the traditionally accepted lens of empiricism, which labels the heart a biological pump, creates barriers for the conscious consideration of this idea and often silences other hearts that may wish to make themselves known to us and express themselves authentically in the world.

By taking an imaginal and reflexive approach, supported by auto/biographical research, this thesis explores ways of seeing, being and knowing that are made possible by adopting the heart as a legitimate way of generating knowledge about the world. Through a heart-centred lens, this research explores the possibility of transforming current understanding of conflict, and subsequently relationships with ourselves, each other and the wider world. Importantly, this work suggests implications for not just conflict resolution and transformation, but for education that is truly transformative – feeding into growing conversations concerning sustainability and wellbeing issues. Certainly, the heart as mediator and teacher demands our imaginative, authentic, empathic and courageous consideration, and it is upon this understanding that this thesis is written.

Amongst the findings, which Louise reports on her website, are the following:

In deep conversation with the heart, our research has: *see overleaf*

- **Uncovered** a lost heart, hidden in our past
- **Discovered** many different layers of the heart - each with its own wisdom and guidance
- **Developed** a way of engaging with these different hearts from within a contemporary framework to enable deep personal transformation
- **Revealed** that each heart is a portal/key; enabling the possibility to be present to what is speaking to you - helping you to deepen your understanding of yourself, and yourself in living relationship with the world

Louise Livingstone PhD is the Founder of the Heart Sense Research Institute – www.heartsenseresearch.co.uk. Her work aims to re-imagine the long-forgotten wise and intelligent heart for contemporary times; guiding individuals into the numerous layers of their own hearts, illuminating different hearts to help navigate daily life with heart awareness, openness, love and compassion. Louise has a flourishing private mentoring practice.

Her next online **Introduction to Heart Sense** course starts on Monday evenings in September 2022: <https://www.heartsenseresearch.co.uk/training-events>

Louise’s thesis, presented to Canterbury Christ Church University School of Teacher Education, is available here: <https://repository.canterbury.ac.uk/item/8w612/how-can-the-thought-of-the-heart-offer-effective-ways-of-engaging-with-conflict-an-imaginal-and-reflexive-study>

Climate Justice and Social Justice

By Petra Griffiths



It is encouraging that many now recognise the need to bring together many elements of social justice with the actions that are needed for the future wellbeing of our planet, rather than working in silos on green issues and social issues. At St James’s Church Piccadilly (where I am part of the Earth Justice team) this is apparent in the naming of Earth Justice

alongside Social Justice as part of our vision statements. A great deal remains to be done following the outcomes of the Glasgow Climate Summit in November 2021.



Photo: Care International UK <https://www.careinternational.org.uk/stories/CARE-at-COP26>

Care International UK has said:

“It is estimated that climate change may push an additional 132 million people into poverty by 2030. The time to act is now. Climate change poses the greatest threat to the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in the global South, particularly women and girls, and people living in poverty.”

Encouraging buds of new growth are:

- **Climate justice** is recognised as an important action point in **development projects** by agencies such as Christian Aid and Care International UK, working alongside local communities worldwide. e.g.



Photo: Christian Aid

Drought due to two failed rainy seasons in Northern Kenya had led to migration. This project aims to enhance the climate resilience and adaptive capacity of communities

through empowering women and young people, supporting community-led planning and budgeting, and developing local advocacy and policy.

- The need for a **Just Transition movement** is taken seriously by green campaigns and by organisations such as Citizens UK, for example during the Mayoral Election in London last year. Citizens UK explains “A ‘Just Transition city’ aims to ensure that new green policies benefit low-income communities, who face significant effects of climate change. We’re supporting efforts to make the city carbon-neutral by 2030 and ensure that the policies of a Green Transition prioritise low-income communities.” A Just Transition means moving to a more sustainable economy in a way that’s fair to everyone. This includes the replacement of jobs related to fossil fuels with those promoting renewable energy without disadvantaging the workers in those industries, as happened when the mines were closed and communities left devastated with only low paid work available.
- **The U.N.** gave a platform to young activists from places most affected by climate change leading up to the COP26 Climate Summit. Campaigners from Fiji, Ecuador, India and Zambia showed film clips of the environmental problems in their communities and pressed Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the UN, about global priorities for action.
- **Universities** have begun to recognise in their courses the need to work inter-sectionally – to include people affected by all forms of disadvantage and exclusion when working towards climate and biodiversity solutions e.g. the new Institute for Climate and Social Justice at the University of Winchester, which aims to run a programme for the public as well as its academic courses, headed by Professor Robert Beckford (see below).

I close with the words of powerful climate justice advocates:

Professor **Robert Beckford**, of the **Institute for Climate Justice and Social Justice** at the University of Winchester, and **Professor of Black Theology at the Queen’s Foundation**:

“I studied liberation theology and began to see liberation as holistic, going beyond individual salvation to something that embraced social justice and environmental justice. The dominant framing in many church traditions focusses on blessing, bounty, God showering unlimited resources on people – which in turn is connected to global capitalism, to a discourse that supports the exploitation of natural resources for economic benefit – which is fundamentally opposed to environmental and social justice.

This perspective is amply demonstrated by the songs that dominate our communal worship..... Where is the room for lament? There is no room for acknowledging the pain, the grief, the suffering. Where are the songs for rage?”

We are in discussion with Professor Beckford about Living Spirituality Connections hosting an event in partnership with St James's Piccadilly in which he shares his inspiring inclusive vision about moving towards climate and social justice.

Dr Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, (marine biologist and author of the Ocean Collective, pictured) and **Katharine K Wilkinson** (author of *Between God and Green*), in their book *All We Can Save. Truth, courage and solutions for the climate crisis* say:

"This speaks of the song at the heart of everything. Soul and soil are not separate. Neither are wind and spirit. Our grief is our love. Our love will be our undoing as we quietly disengage from the collective madness of the patriarchal mind that says aggression is the way forward. Today we need to rewrite the rules with all people in mind; feel a ferocious love for the planet we call home; collaborate with and support nature; moving from climate action to the necessity of climate justice. We need to agree what a just transition means and involve both individual and structural change."

Petra Griffiths is Coordinator of Living Spirituality Connections, and Pastoral Care Coordinator at St James's Church Piccadilly, where she also helps with the work of Eco Church.

A challenge to the idea of Creation Care

By Alice Codner



The phrase 'creation care' makes me wince, because it seems to apply to everything except humans: you wouldn't call social work or heart surgery, 'creation care' no matter how accurate a description that might be. No. This phrase has, in my opinion, become yet another way of separating ourselves, as humans, from the rest of the existing order: another way of ingraining a sense of our own superiority over poor "creation" that needs looking after.

As if we were not also made in a day.

As if we were not also evolved from amoebas.

As if we were not also made of cells and dependent on all other life forms for our survival.

A 'dualism' is a structure of opposites. It's this tendency to see the world in binaries: us and them, right and wrong, good and bad. It's also a tendency to divide the world into structural hierarchies, with an upper hand and a lower hand: strong and weak, rich and poor, powerful and powerless.

Eco-feminist Val Plumwood describes five characteristics of this dualistic structure [\[1\]](#):

- "Backgrounding": where the upper hand organises and relies upon the lower hand, while staying in denial about their dependence.
- "Radical exclusion": a belief held by the upper side that they have absolutely nothing in common with the lower.
- "Incorporation": where the lower side is defined only in relation to the upper side as a lack, as what they are not.
- "Instrumentalism": in which the lower side is only a means to an end for the upper, with no intrinsic value of their own.
- "Homogenisation": ignoring the diversity of the lower side through stereotyping, seeing them only as the 'Others'.

When the world is understood in this way, we end up with an entitled 'upper side', a position certain people imagine is their right to hold (if they are even aware of it), whom the 'Others' are there to serve. The 'lower side' are then stereotyped, their intrinsic value forgotten, or meted out according to their usefulness. The upper look down on the lower, mistreat and abuse them. Think of 400 despicable years of white masters and black slaves; think of dominating husbands and oppressed wives; think of the global rich shipping their rubbish to the global poor whom they then accuse of having high carbon emissions.

Now think of 'humans' and 'creation'. What happens when this relationship follows the same pattern?

- We 'organise' and rely on 'creation' while staying in denial about our state of dependence.
- We imagine we are uniquely important humans, and are totally different to 'creation'.
- We define 'creation' as everything that is not human.
- We see 'creation' as only a means to an end, be that for food or aesthetic enjoyment.
- We ignore the diversity and intricacy of creatures and life forms that we have lumped together as 'creation'.

As with the previous examples, the more we see the world within this dualistic mindset, the more we dominate, mistreat and abuse, without necessarily even noticing. The 'upper side' never feel like it is 'their fault'.

So I don't want to practise 'creation care'; I don't want to imagine us humans grandiosely as Guardians of Nature; I don't want to care for our 'Resources', like a stockroom supervisor looking at diminishing shelves of size 16 jeans out the back. I don't want to forget that we are vulnerable, and absolutely dependent on the whole panoply of life, which exists for its own sake, not ours. Of course I support the installation of solar panels and planting trees and improving energy efficiency. But even as we work towards our vital, ecological goals, we need to ensure that we are not simultaneously complicit in perpetuating the same dualistic structures that continue to lead us deeper into the current climate and ecological emergency.

Christianity is well placed to help us here, challenging our dualistic mindsets throughout the year, as every holy day, we are faced again with the nonduality of life in our stories. At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of a beyond-time, omnipotent, helpless, crying, God-baby. On Good Friday, we remember God as both simultaneously (an) omnipresent, everlasting, beyond-gender Being-Becoming, and a middle-Eastern, male, human, mammal, being violently killed in a specific geographical location. In the Eucharist, we share bread that is a physical-spiritual bread-body story-enactment, in which the transcendent God is immanent to us, as we swallow God-ness, taking in divinity.

Over and over again in our faith, we find power, powerlessness, life, death, divinity, humanity-animality all belonging together, tangled up in ways that go beyond anything we can put into a box, or fully, logically comprehend. And yet, perhaps if we take these stories seriously, their non-dualistic presence may be helpful, challenging companions on our journey towards a sustainable life on this planet.

After all, we too are animals. We too are both powerful *and* powerless. We care *and* are cared for. We are creatures *and* we are uniquely responsible. We are fragile, dependent, *and* we have a lot to do.

Alice Codner is a student at the University of Edinburgh and a member of St James's Piccadilly. In her essay entitled **Environmental Education in Churches: Beyond the Dualistic Framework**, (presented as part of the Outdoor Environmental and Sustainability Education MSc at the University of Edinburgh) Alice explores how Place-Based Education (PBE) and Outdoor Learning in the City (OLC) can be used to re-orient teaching and learning in churches in UK to enable them to effectively address the current eco-emergency.

The full essay is available here:

https://www.livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/alice_codner_essay.pdf

[1] Plumwood, V. (1993). *Feminism and the mastery of nature*. Routledge.

How then shall we live?

What does your life ask of you?

By Michael Lerner



Holding hope that the global polycrisis will end up being a “wake up call” for the emergence of some kind of planetary ethos or trans-cultural civilization.

The ultimate question for each of us is not to determine how the world will go. We cannot control it. We cannot know. The ultimate question for each of us is how we live our lives. In the face of the reality of the polycrisis, do we choose ways of seeing ourselves and others that leads us to anguish, cynicism, resignation and despair? Or do we discover a way of seeing and living that leads us to lives of courage, service, gratitude, compassion and peace?

We are far from the first to face this question. Countless generations before us believed in their own times that the world as they knew it would soon come to an end. Maimonides famously wrote it was not permitted to count the days till the coming of the Messiah. We in our time believe that science has given us a deeper truth about the state of the world. Yet the psychological truth of living with a sense of possible finitude has not substantially changed.

One thing I know from 40 years of intimate work with people with life-threatening cancers. When people are diagnosed with life-threatening cancers, they often experience their cancers as a “wake up call.” They almost never move towards more materialistic values. They are toward deeper awareness of what we may call interbeing—of the shared reality of suffering and the shared imperative of compassion and love.

Dame Edith Sitwell said of the poet William Blake, “he was cracked, but it was though the crack that the light came.” Our wounds are not only wounds—they are potential openings. I say “potential openings” because our wounds can spiral us down as well as upward.

We also know that in the history of civilizations, great collective wounds—wars, plagues and famines—often lead to profound shifts in whole cultures. This was true at the end of the American Civil War, World War I and World War II. But these civilizational shifts are by no means always positive, as the experience of Germany after its defeat in World War I demonstrates. Civilizations, like people, can go either up or down after great traumas.

So we can indeed hope that the global polycrisis will end up being a “wake up call” for the emergence of some kind of planetary ethos or trans-cultural civilization.

I am sharing this work in progress with you because I have no choice but to keep asking these questions. At 78, I have experienced some of these deep wounds myself. I know what it means to be at the edge of life. I continue to live the questions I asked myself 46 years ago when I first imagined Commonweal as a center for healing ourselves and healing the earth. What does a life dedicated to that purpose ask of me today?

So, gentle reader, if you have made it this far with me, I leave you with this question:

What does your life—with whatever sense of calling or purpose you may have—ask of you?

How do you hold what it means for you to live in these changing times? And if you have no sense of calling or purpose—that’s fine, too—what will you do with this one irreplaceable day in your life?

Thanks for walking with me. I hope we find ways of aligning ourselves as a community of friends dedicated to finding lives of joy, hope and service in these changing times. May we join forces with other communities of friends around the world who share our commitments to safeguarding the sacred beauty of this miraculous planet we have been given. May we love justice. May we do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with the mystery of the universe.

The long essay from which this article comes can be viewed at:

<https://angleofvision.org/2022/04/07/changing-times>

Michael Lerner is President and Co-founder of **Commonweal**, Healing people. Healing the Planet, based in California. <https://www.commonweal.org/>

An Artist's Rule of Life **By Linda Courage**

How to stay steady in a storm

Now that's something worth knowing

(continued)

maybe it's akin to walking on water

*do care for yourself
and the little things you love*

*and turn around to the light
when all seems too much*

*and sit and do nothing
putting aside all*

and be patient

*you are growing
unseen muscles
that sometimes
tear*

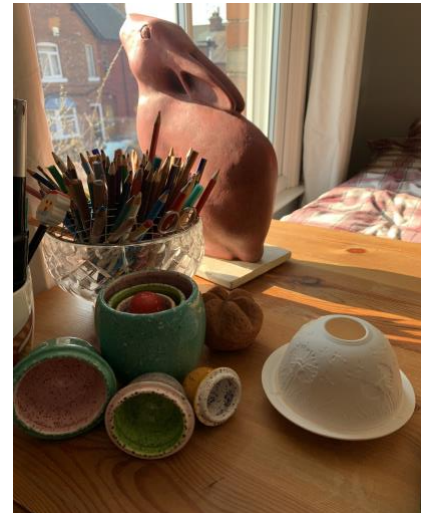
*savour joy
however fleeting
and look for answers
from your quiet places
they will be there
if you can steady*

be kind

Lectio everything

*and maybe
you will find yourself
trusting.*

Linda Courage 2022



It has been an honour and privilege to facilitate 'The Artist's Rule' series on zoom with a group of pilgrims from around the UK and overseas. Focussing on the archetypes of our internal Artist and Monk, and using Christine Valters Paintner's book as our guide, we have met every fortnight spanning autumn to springtime, to look at different aspects of monastic tradition and practice. The poem above is an example of an artist's rule of life generated by working through each chapter of the book and distilling insights that emerged from each.

We met from 3-4pm and then 5-6pm UK time so that the series was accessible to people in different time zones. The middle hour was spent engaging with activities suggested in each section of the book, for example: going for a contemplative walk, gathering items and receiving images, writing a poem, identifying important questions, creating significant images, reflecting on particular invitations.

The structure of our first hour together emerged and included time to catch up with each other, a heart centred meditation, a short introduction, guided reflection, and a time of Lectio Divina (a process of reading 'between the lines' of life by focussing on something that attracts our attention from a reading, or image, or piece of music...). Poetry, images and video clips added depth to this hour.

Our last hour began with what became something of a 'health' slot, and a 'sharing of resources' time. Then thoughts were gathered ready for sharing in breakout rooms and in a plenary time. People shared what they were getting from the focus of the session and Christine's words, as well as their art work, insights and ponders. Our time together finished with inspiration of some kind; I have access to some Abbey of the Arts prayer cycle video clips that we enjoyed (see www.abbeyofthearts.com), alongside other clips, music, and poetry.

Before and between sessions we used Google Classroom to post resource materials and to exchange thoughts. This facility remains open to those who have done the series. People really valued the time together and looked forward to meeting with each other again each fortnight. Some would like to repeat the whole series because "it is so rich, and there's so much in it".

Each person was able to identify what aspects of monastic tradition fit their own circumstances and creative lives, whether that be in challenging working lives, or seeking ways forward within retirement. The penultimate section of our guide book invites us to bring together these treasures in the form of a bespoke 'Artist's Rule of Life'.

At the close of the series, some identified a thirst for more creative time together - something to ponder. The whole series was run in association with St Bede's Pastoral Centre in York, who provided all administrative and zoom support. We will repeat the series to run across a similar time frame, beginning in November 2022. For more details please visit www.stbedes.org.uk where a detailed description with course dates is available.

Acknowledgements: with thanks to everyone who registered for the series, and for your varied and beautiful contributions. Thanks also to Fiona, Siobhan, Marion, and Julia in St Bede's Pastoral Centre, Petra and Heather-Jane in Living Spirituality Connections, and Christine and John in The Abbey of the Arts, who have brought so much to the birthing of this and other arts and spirituality events.

Linda Courage is Arts and Spirituality Coordinator for Living Spirituality Connections, and a member of our Working and Discernment Group. Linda has a heart for encouraging and guiding others in practices which help to reconnect us to ourselves and restore our vitality and aliveness.

The Language of Resurrection

By Ivan Khovacs

“...there is nothing in John’s Gospel about Jesus departing. There is only this sense of this continuous presence that is being carried on by the life of faith.”



It strikes me every time we read from John’s Gospel that, everywhere we turn, we meet someone who is absolutely alive to love and in love with life. Life abundant. Not just life lived moment to moment, day to day; not simply getting by, but all life pointed in the direction of Christ’s Resurrection life. It is in John’s Gospel that we hear Jesus say to his disciples: “I came that they might have life, and life lived more abundantly” (John 10:10). To encounter Christ in John’s Gospel is to live life to the full.

The poet Janet Morley helps us reflect on this passage by noting that—in their bereavement and in their unexpected encounters with the risen Christ—the disciples see everything in sharp contrasts:

“Everything is super-vivid,” she says, “alive beyond its own boundaries. Everything is both ‘natural’ and ‘infinite’. The whole world is ‘yes’—affirming, positive, and alive to God”

But even in the affirming and poetic pen of John the Evangelist you see the strains and cracks ordinary human language. And maybe the only language for Resurrection is the language of love, the joy of seeing a much-loved friend, the companionship and

communion of food around a fire, the rising aromas of fish over the grill. In our passage from John 21 the language of resurrection speaks of the abundance of fish they netted that day—one-hundred and fifty, we are told— after a fruitless night on the lake. But John’s Gospel has been pointing us to abundance all along: there is Jesus turning water into wine, the feeding of five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, John’s themes are the overflowing of life, the abundance of love that Christ came to bring, a love that—far from making us blind—makes us see things in the right light.

Even the terror of war abroad, and the rot of misogyny in the news here at home, cannot keep us from seeing and affirming that—today, on this 3rd Sunday of Easter—this gathering in the name of the risen Christ culminates in celebration. And that every moment is a wakeup call to life and love. Fear and obligations are not the kinds of things that will make us go the extra mile, do for one another, sacrifice for others; only love will do that: love will make us do the things that God is calling us to do.

And so today, as is the case every time we gather, is an affirmation that every bit of space separating you and me, and us from one another, is space filled with God, brimming with life, abundant with the possibilities of living in love. So, are you grateful to be alive? Are you grateful to be living **this** life?

.....God’s Word came and dwell among us. Now the disciples are the continuing of God’s dwelling among us. Curiously, there is nothing in John’s Gospel about Jesus departing. There is only this sense of this continuous presence that is being carried on by the life of faith. Here, too, is a statement of the abundance of God’s activity and being in the world, not at a distance, but in us, in you and me, going forward, acting out of love and in response to God’s abundance.

And so here is my only point today:

- Abundance is the economy of God.
- Love is the economy of God.
- Invitation is the economy of God.

The ‘charcoal fire’ Jesus and his disciples gather around speaks of a vivid and clear-edged concrete reality. Food is to be tasted, Christ’s resurrection body is to be tasted. The poet Michael Symmons Roberts (in ***Food for Risen Bodies***) adds a final detail to our reading of the fish on the grill: he imagines the salt of the fish rubbing into the wounds in Jesus’ hands. For the poet, the resurrection does not undo the suffering. It is not the denial of death. It is not amnesia. It is a new memory stamped on the lives of the living. The marks of suffering remain— not on a ghost or a fantasy figure—but on a transformed body:

“This is not hunger, this is resurrection”

Christ's risen body, on the beach, telling us that this planet, this earth is not a disposable backdrop to a temporary life: it, too, is cherished, touched, and burnished in the love of God: sand, salt, seaside air, and spirit, the same Spirit of God, which at the creation in Genesis hovered above the waters now joins a fellowship of spirit and body by Sea of Galilee.

What does Christ's economy of abundance, love, and invitation have to say to us today?

Come and add your voice to a common voice in asking: Where are we going from here? What do we hope God will unfold in this coming year? What is God calling us to in making a resurrection world a reality?

Jesus, the resurrected Christ, greets the disciples on the shore; he has fish and bread on grilling over a charcoal. And he calls across the beach as the disciples pull in their large catch: "Children, bring some of the fish that you have just caught. Come, put it on the grill: let us have breakfast together."

What can each of us bring to what God is doing in this church (and in all the places where we are based)?

Would you join me in this word of gratitude, by way of the poem 'i thank You God for most this amazing day' by E. E. Cummings (1950).

'i thank You God for most this amazing day'

E. E. Cummings (1950).

i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?
(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

Rev Dr **Ivan Khovacs** is a priest at St James's Church Piccadilly and Senior Lecturer at Christ Church Canterbury University, teaching primarily in the areas of Christian doctrine, Systematic Theology and Theology & Literature, and overseeing teaching in Pastoral Theology.

This article is extracted from the sermon given on 2 May 2022. To hear the whole sermon entitled **The Eyes of my Eyes are Opened**, go to:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHRXpP0Gqz_3XbPSRNmSsIXuTWQ64IqtN

and scroll down to third Sunday of Easter.

Talking About God

by Alice Codner



Evening primroses

What are the right words for talking about God?

Words that are fervent or glib evaporate in the morning sun;

Even 'he' or 'she' is already far away.

When I say the word 'love' too loudly I miss

The soles of my feet on solid ground

Plunging my fingers into fresh soil

And the life-oxygen that circulates my body bringing

tenderness, the flexibility of limbs relaxing,

Eyes meeting eyes that really see, really look.

Please do not tell me to pray every day

Or fill my head with lists of requirements
Because they have nothing to do with
The surprise of happenings closer than my own mind
that are quiet, as deep as my belly
and as sporadic as snow.

What are the right words for talking about God?
Stories that vanish beneath the force of certainty
Images that cannot be held
softening,
an evening primrose unfurling at sunset,
a child vulnerable when the outburst is over,
the settling of sand in water,
an out-breath,

Earth, Word, Being, Whisper, Nearness, Silence