

Dec 22, 2024

Pr. Steve

Texts: Hebrews 10: 5-10; Luke 1: 46b-55; Luke 1: 39-45

In the name of God, Abba/Imma, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The icon of Mary is on your bulletin cover today. Take a look. This is the Black Madonna, very popular in the 12th-15th centuries, and having a revival now. This icon is 'written' by a friend of mine—one of the monks at the Redwoods Monastery. A couple typical things you'll always see, is that the Wisdom Eye between the brows is enlarged, and, also, the throat of the person or saint depicted is very large, symbolizing the breath of the Holy Spirit filling this person. If you want more details about icons, you can talk to Mary [LaCasse] after worship.

Monks or iconographers do not paint icons. Icons are written. It's a writing of the relationship inside of the Spirit that the iconographer is experiencing. So, this is not a painting or an image. Icons are actually windows—windows which we see through. These are wordless prayers you see through into the Truth, into God, into your own Self.

You see into the Connection—the very Mystery of Life—as revealed in this moment of a saint or two in the icon.

Therefore, all the bulletins today must leave this church. I don't want one left behind. You're not kind when you leave them here. You take this home, and for the rest of the Christmas season—whether it's the refrigerator, wherever you want—give yourself the gift of this wordless prayer of simply gazing into this window of the Mystery. It will speak deeply if you give it time. (*Shopping frenzy is over!*)

This banner has the word *Ruach* on it, which is Hebrew for the Spirit—and Spirit is feminine. The image conveyed here is the light bursting out at the very beginning of the cosmos, when God said, "*Let it be*". And it just pours out and over everything, and into everything, the vitality of life and all that is, from that initial gift of God, "*Let it be*".

If I told you that was the Big Bang, you'd have no objections, would you? Right? Remember how it condenses—you got this, you know —infinitesimally small, and then suddenly [Whoosh]. And we all accept the Big Bang now, don't we?

Well, before the Big Bang, what was there? *Love*—filling and permeating everything. In our ultimate destiny, friends, the whole driving of evolution is towards the fullness where Love is All in All. It is not just the material universe. It is one that is embedded with the energy of Compassion, and we get to begin discovering it now. It's been going on for a few billion years (in case you haven't noticed).

And there's a wonderful reflection I'd like to share with you about this—"*From the Beginning*" by the theologian, Leonardo Boff, who is Brazilian.

(And so our Scriptures begin with the spirit Ruach hovering over the abyss of the waters. You recall that? There was nothing, and this Spirit is simply hovering over.)

It is for the Spirit that all things came into being. The Ruach who was pushing all things upward and forward. The Spirit who permeates all matter and complexifies life, the Spirit who caused life to explode. It's the Spirit, who in mammals arouses feelings, and care, and love. The Spirit who lights up the human spirit so that we can understand things. It is the Spirit who makes the prophets cry out, poets sing, inventors create. The Spirit who sows love, and friendship, and benevolence. The Spirit who stirs justice, compassion, and mercy. And it is the supreme gift of the Spirit to instill within us self-giving towards others in love—the most incredible miracle of life—that we can care about somebody else besides ourselves.

Even when operating on a limited basis, it's better than everything else that do we do—it's possible. And that Spirit who hovers over the very beginning of the wholeness of Creation—in this text and experience today hovers over Mary and inquires, *'May the God of love, the one who is that communion with all life, enter you/me, dance within you, within the temple of your being. In the sanctuary of your heart, can the great mystery, the great integration of the Creator and the creation, come together in a most intense and intimate fullness, provoking a new life within.'*

God does nothing without our consent. This is the ultimate humility of love, that God will not push, intimidate, press, let alone violate, anyone, always seeking our consent, And Mary opens herself, and says, *'Let It be.'* Let It be. All that you intend. *'Let it be.'* And then she goes on for the rest of her life opening herself, again, and again.

Shortly, after the birth of Jesus, they go to the Temple for a blessing, and there the prophet Simeon greets her and the family, and says to her, *'This child, your child, is going to pierce your heart. He's destined for the rise and the fall of many. He will be a sign of contradiction, which the world will not want to accept, and he will pierce your heart.'*

For too many centuries, and even yet today, when we hear that phrase about piercing her heart, we think of Mary as so passive. *'She's the woman of sorrows, they never stop. She bears them. She endures sorrow after sorrow after sorrow. Why can't the women in this congregation be like Mary? Just take it.'* Huh?

As Jen prayed, [Mary's] a woman of courage. And that piercing of her heart, I believe, is the piercing of clarity. She began to see through our brokenness, and agony, and all the ways we hurt each other. She sees through into the Truth, into the God who loves us beyond all fathoming. And for that she pays the price—that seeing through into the wholeness, into the love for which we were made. And that brokenness of our humanity is painful—but that clarity is everything.

That's why she sings the *Magnificat* (which again, Jen read). Everything upside down and inside out. Last, first; first, last. Starving are going to eat. The powerful ripped down from their thrones. A new day, a new beginning if we have the courage to follow and '*let it be*'. We get to choose again, and again.

That phrase shows up three times within the Scriptures—very powerfully at the very beginning of the cosmos being created, as I said, '*Let it be*.' Today, Mary, with the Spirit's invitation, and she responds, '*Let it be*'. And then Jesus in Gethsemane, and on the cross when God abandons him, says, '*Let it be*.'

And this resurrecting love, confounding us, inspiring us, begins to permeate the whole of creation. So that now, now, we are the ones who get to answer the invitation. God asks, '*Can I enter within and live freely within you?*' Exalting in the Temple, the sanctuary, which you are—which is needed by God for the renewal of this whole creation. Isn't that overwhelmingly clear? How we must enter into the depths of transformation for the healing of these times? Will you '*Let it be*'? It's our choice, day-by-day, season by season. Will we '*Let it be*' within us—or not?

We get to see through the brokenness, the hurt, that agony. We get to see through to the Truth. We get to see through to the God who is Love, and who invites us endlessly into the communion with all life for which we were created.

This is the God who sees us through no matter what.

Let It Be.

Amen.

The peace, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.