

A Celebration of Life

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor

Easter Vigil, Year A — Sunday 9 April 2023

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And God saw that it was good...words we heard this morning from our first reading in this vigil.

On Tuesday I spent some quiet time sitting in Goulburn Cathedral. The scaffolding in the sanctuary which has been there for many months has been removed. The East Window has been renovated and can now be seen again in all its glory. I checked my phone—Google maps. The Cathedral is perfectly oriented east-west, as is the tradition of ancient churches. The cathedral congregation are no doubt right now seeing the light of the dawn beginning to stream through that glorious window. In case you are interested we are pointing north, north-west! Never mind!

There is something extraordinarily primal about this morning. We could very well be Druids or some other ancient peoples looking to the dawn, celebrating as they would have done with the elements of light, fire, and water. Some Christian folk would claim that this is paganism. I would not disagree! The genius of our Christian faith is the ability to gather up and give a new perspective to ancient ways. We are after all inheritors of the traditions of the Old Testament, they were hardly Anglicans were they?! We gather this morning under the banners of earth, fire, water, air, and spirit—very appropriate for such a celebration.

It is becoming more and more apparent to us that it is not just the human race that is need of salvation. Our scriptures are full of references to the created order, this is not a modern idea, a fashionable theological theme (or meme): “for God so loved *the world*.” Modern science has revealed to us the interconnectedness of every living thing, this is a wonder, not in any way a threat to our faith, but an affirmation of the beauty and order and complexity of the God we worship.

We all know the story of Galileo who was banished by the Church for his teaching that the earth orbited around the sun, not the other way round. He has been rehabilitated in recent times. A similar fate nearly befell the French Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who died in the nineteen fifties. Teilhard de Chardin wrote of the ‘Omega Point’ as a theorized future event in which the entirety of the universe spirals toward a final point of unification. Teilhard argued that the Omega Point is the Christian Logos, namely the Christ, the one who draws all things into himself, who in the words of the Nicene Creed, is “God from God”, “Light from Light”, “True God from true God”, and “through him all things were made”. In the Book of Revelation, Christ is described three times as “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end”, as we inscribed on our Paschal Candle this morning. Teilhard’s theory has not been disproved, in fact modern science has strengthened it.

So this morning we look towards the dawn, we celebrate with at least three of the elements light, fire, and water. This is a celebration of life and life giving in its fullness, not just ours but that of the created order a new life revealed to us by the risen Christ, who in his death and resurrection becomes an omega point towards which everything is drawn. We can barely begin to conceive of the end of the universe, but we can begin to conceive of living this new life, reconciled with one another and with everything that lives and breathes, in Christ, who is both the creator and the created, and as such embodies a renewed way of living a perfect reconciliation.

On Friday we reflected particularly on those dreadful words from the cross, 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me.' It is the cry of creation, a cry we hear today. We waited yesterday through the desolate silence of Holy Saturday, again a silence and desolation that we feel today in our time. But this morning, this morning what is revealed is the perfect reconciliation of the resurrection, the undoing for that abandonment. Through light, fire, and water we see and touch the new life that is ours.

I pray we can live it and that we can journey together drawn into the future, into the God in whom all things have been made new. Amen.