



Love, Power, Awareness and Creation

You can show your great power any time you wish, and no one can stand against it. In your sight the whole world is a grain of sand, .. a drop of dew on the ground in the morning.....you love everything that exists: you do not despise anything that you have made. If you had not liked it you would not have made it in the first place. (Wis 11:21-22,24)

One morning recently whilst swimming in shallow, still ocean water I noticed ahead of me a shadow and, supposing it to be seaweed, I kept swimming. The 'weed' turned out to be a huge sting ray. Now I know that the barb of a sting ray is extremely painful and in some cases life threatening. Here was this huge ray only inches under me yet, in those first seconds of recognizing it, a choice between love and fear seemed to happen within me. The experience of such physical closeness to this gracious creature was one of pure gift. For a moment the sting ray remained where it was, then it slowly moved away.

In reflecting on this experience, I was struck by the sense of the silent movement of this beautiful creature towards me whilst I remained unaware of it until it was right underneath me. I was surprised by the close encounter, having entered the water with no expectation of such a meeting or indeed awareness of the presence of the sting ray. But I was also touched by the intimacy of the encounter and a powerful sense of love for this sea dweller. I began to reflect on awareness, love and power in our relationship with creation.

The words of Wisdom from the Old Testament (above) speak of the immensity of both God and the created cosmos. We are indeed like a grain of sand in the face of such immensity and yet as the writer of Wisdom says we are sustained by the love of the Creator. God's love for everything that exists forms the basis of a Christian ecological ethic of living. We may not yet be capable of such a love or of seeing the whole world in a grain of sand yet we are called to grow towards such love and awareness.

The Wisdom writer also speaks of great power. What then is the relationship between love and power and how do we understand these in our own relationship with God's creation and the, often unseen, processes of nature?

From processes in the ozone layer that protect us from UV radiation, to the network of biochemical activities found inside each cell in our bodies, we are surrounded by unseen processes



DEVASTATION: The awesome power of geological events was seen in the Asian tsunami, which left scattered debris, scoured earth and stranded boats where there used to be a village in Sri Lanka (photo: Percy Samara-Wickrama).

and activities that maintain us and the world in which we live. Such complexity in creation is outside our usual sphere of awareness. Yet, as we go about our day-to-day activities, these processes of creation go on in an invisible life-giving dance. The power inherent in this activity, given by God the Creator, is indeed awesome.

Humanity, however, often misappropriates power in life-denying ways. This abuse of power is evidenced by such things as our voracious appetite for often unnecessary consumer goods, over-reliance on fossil

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fuels as an energy source, cruelty to animals in the livestock trade, deforestation and resulting loss of habitat for non-human life and so on. We see creation as being human centred and therefore live as though creation is here to serve us. We live as though we have no dependence on other life in the whole earth community; as though we are sufficient to ourselves and are entitled to exert power in whatever way we like over other life.

As Christians, we say that we are here to serve God; that our power is only in God. To really live out such a belief we must ask ourselves who, in reality, do we serve? Surely, if we answer by saying we serve God, then we must also serve God's creation.

If we say, along with the Wisdom writer, 'You love everything that exists' then surely we too

must at least attempt to love 'everything that exists'. This love will recognize not only our own interdependence with all creation but will also desire the integrity and fulfilment of all creation.

The power of geological events such as earthquakes and tsunamis can be seriously destructive and of a kind that we humans cannot 'stand against'. Such destructive power is part of the evolutionary process. The power of God however is the power to love even in the midst of destruction and at times when that love may seem invisible to us. It is the power of love that we know in the reality of Christ on the cross.

We human beings have been gifted with great love and power even though this often seems hidden or outside our usual awareness. But the love and power with which we have been gifted is divine in origin. The whole earth community, of which we are a part, and with whom we have interdependence is suffering. For too long we have used our power to exploit creation.

Many Christians today however are recognizing the call to care for creation. Such caring begins with awareness, which precedes action. Let us all grow in our awareness of the life process and our part in the dance of life. Let us learn to use our power in the truly Christian way that Christ shows; us not for power over, but for the purposes of love.

And let us always live in gratitude for the unseen forces of nature that sustain us as we are also mindful of the ways in which humanity debilitates nature. Our true power may indeed be in our capacity for co-creativity with God.

May we grow in the capacity to 'love everything that exists' and act for the integrity of creation.