

**Reflection – On Occasion of the Celebration of the Tri-Diocesan
Covenant**

Delivered at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Hamilton

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Tonight in the Word that is offered for our contemplation, we are presented with two texts of farewell. On the occasion of leaving Ephesus for Jerusalem, Paul addresses the elders of the Church, beseeching them to remain vigilant and 'on guard'. In John's Gospel, we are privy to an intimate encounter between Jesus and his Holy Father, where Jesus, conscious of his impending earthly end, implores the guidance and protection of God for his beloved disciples.

In listening attentively to both stories, it is apparent that there is something of which they speak of that is ultimately precious and tender. It is their concern for their respective communities that they continue to dwell in the delight of the Lord and that they maintain a steadfast devotion to their God.

And so what of this for us tonight? How are we to remain loyal and faithful to our God at a time where a conscience is filled with mass media, let alone clear, where a sense of other is indeed often foreign; where contemplation competes with consumption. The answer I believe lies in one of the parables from tonight's Gospel; our response to and our relationship with truth – the truth made manifest in God and God's Word. As with ours, so too with every generation that has and will be; an authentic communion with the source of all being must be founded upon this truth.

How can we be sure however that the truth we claim is indeed true to the source of all? May I suggest that it have some foundation to the spirit of Dairmuid O'Murchu's theological notion of ancestral grace. Through O'Murchu's eyes, we are encouraged to see the truth of God's unconditional love, God's grace, as a symphony that has been at play for our entire 13.7 billion year history; revealed in all creation and every creature, and especially so in Jesus. As he suggests, "...led by the spirit, the earthly Jesus reconnects us to our deep ancient past, inspires us to be co-creators in the present and paves the way for our next evolutionary breakthrough."

At a time when science is revealing more and more about the intricacies of this divine symphony, how are we as missionary Christian's called to live in connection with this truth? The answer lies not only in recognition of ancestral grace and ecological conversion, but also in response to the question posed by Stephen Hawking, "*what is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe?*"

Indeed, the commitment to covenant that we celebrate tonight, is an attempt to communicate authentically with this truth. It is part of our evolutionary history; a very recent part of a 13.7 Billion year old story. It is part of our search as Christians to be true to our mission; in response to having been sent into the world.

We know however as Christians, that our being in communion with God is reciprocal. As Jesus declares in tonight's Gospel, "I have sent them into the world." We are called to be people of mission; to be co-creators.

And at this stage of our evolutionary history, the call has never been more urgent. Our planet is in peril! The evil one that Jesus is so concerned to protect us against, has manifested itself in the shape of our current ecological plight. As Thomas Berry says, we have become autistic to the rhythm's and processes of Earth. Perhaps this is what Paul is striving to guard us against? The savage wolves may be the flawed human, the very presence of evil that has turned human-earth relations away from communion to dominion.

To be true Christians then is to lead the evolutionary leap to ecological conversion; to be a people of mission towards co-creation; to be disciples of the truth in an era where human endeavour has revealed many mysteries of the universe. This is the world we are being sent into. A world of infinite paradox. As stated by Elizabeth Johnson, "The quest to find creation, this generation's great intellectual religious adventure, is a matter of life or death."

Being true to this call will indeed involve being hated. Conversion to be safeguards of the dance of creation will bring us into conflict with the dominions of empire that have built pillars of profit and progress, for true ecological conversion brings also a commitment to social justice. It is important not to see these people as personal perpetrators of this evil, but as brothers and sisters of the agricultural and industrial age who are now part of an era of human evolutionary history that has woken from its autistic slumber; a human family that dwells in a security far greater than wage and possessions. We are sensing the wheels of change in this great turning in our very region, as our industries seek ways in which their production can use rather than abuse natural resources. For our survival this is essential. But as Christian's surely

our mantra is to thrive, not just survive. The radical transformation required to once again sing with the universe is religious in nature. As a missionary people being sent into this world; striving to be true, we must lead this change.

In our constant struggle to be disciples of the truth in this era of ecological conversion, the new human will be at home with mysticism. Citing Dorothy Soelle, O'Murchu states that, "...true mysticism engages us in resistance of all that militates against growth toward wholeness at every level of life. Incarnational spirituality, like ancestral grace, is that combination of divine intoxication with a passionate commitment to realising right relationships of love and justice at every level of God's creation." Such living makes real the words of Karl Rahner, "The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he/she will not exist at all." Such living makes us a missionary people, made holy by our communion with the divine dance.