

## Interesting Quotes from TERCE

### Questions for Discussion:

What attracts your heart and mind from the readings?

What do you wish Delio had developed more clearly?

### 15. The Cosmic Christ

The notion that Christ is the firstborn of creation, the head of the whole shebang from the beginning, was supplanted in the early church by the emphasis on sin and salvation. Saint Augustine, in particular, felt the need to formulate a doctrine of original sin in order to highlight the saving grace of God. By the eleventh century the need to explain the damage due to the sin of Adam and Eve became the principal reason for Jesus Christ. In the fourteenth century, an explicit doctrine on the primacy of Christ was formed by the Franciscan theologian John Duns Scotus, who said that God is love and, from all eternity, God willed to love a creature to grace and glory. Whether or not sin ever existed, Christ would have come, because Christ is first in God's intention to love. Hence, Christ is first in God's will to love and thus to create. The reason for Jesus Christ is not sin but the fullness of love. This view is consonant with the scriptures.

How do we know this Christ of the cosmos? When we say that "Jesus is the Christ," we are saying that the humanity of Jesus is one with divinity, the mystery hidden from the beginning

of the world (Eph 3:9). There is a particularity here, a haecceitas ("thisness") that cannot be overlooked. Jesus is the Christ which means all that God is, is given to us in Jesus, rendering a new understanding of God as relational, self-communicative, self-emptying. Through the human-historical life of Jesus we come to know a different type of God from that the Jews or Muslims profess. Jesus called God "Abba," and his deep unity with God was expressed by a new energy, the Spirit of love.

So does everyone have to become Christian to know the Christ? Absolutely not. Christ is more than

Jesus. Christ is the communion of divine personal love expressed in every created form of reality-

every star, leaf, bird, fish, tree, rabbit, and human person. Everything is christified because everything

expresses divine love incarnate. However, Jesus Christ is the "thisness" of God, so what Jesus is by nature everything else is by grace (divine love).

Expressed in the "thisness" of our own, particular lives, each of us is a little word of the Word of God,

a mini-incarnation of divine love. The journey inward requires surrender to this mystery in our lives,

and this means letting go of our "control buttons."

It means dying to the untethered selves that occupy us daily;

it means embracing the sufferings of our lives,

it means allowing God's grace to empower us for life;

it means entering into the unknowns of our lives, and learning to

trust the darkness, for the tenderness of divine love is already there.

## 16. Christ, the Future

When Jesus of Nazareth emerged into public ministry around the age of thirty, his provincial

Middle Eastern world was rocked by political turmoil. His message was radical, inspiring, and, in many ways, startling. He had a deep awareness of God's immanent presence, and he announced to those around him that God had broken into history and was now present in their midst.

He had one single focus-the reign of God-and he was willing to suffer and die a shameful political death so that God's reign could be realized in history.

Jesus had a particularity of love fiercely centered on God's indwelling presence. Yet it was this

willingness to suffer for the sake of God that impelled the early church to recognize Jesus as the Christ-the Anointed One. The death of an innocent man who, in the prime of his life, submitted to execution in the name of God and then rose from the dead-well. In the person of Jesus, something new broke open into history, a power like no other political or personal power, an experience of divine power that enkindled the disciples to risk their lives for the sake of the gospel. They truly believed that earthly life was opened to a new future of life in God.

The humanity of Jesus relates to every human person, without exception due to race, religion, language, or creed. The heart of every human person -rich, poor, black, white, Jew, or Hindu-is entangled with the spirit of God's love. Every person has a God center, every person is part of the Christ mystery, and every person can manifest the Christ. Using the term Christophany, Raimon Panikkar asserts that each person bears the mystery of Christ within.

## 17. The Rainbow of Pride

As Elton John recounts in the movie Rocketman: "I am a fag, a puffer, a queer," terms that in the twentieth century meant, "I am an oddity, not normal." And who defined normal? Well, religions did a fine job limiting nature to two options, male and female, because that is how God created us, according to the book of Genesis.

Yet, what we usually miss is that God created male and female, not male or female. God endowed nature with a much greater freedom of expression than humans have assumed. One has only to study the evolution of sex from simple cellular to multicellular complex life to realize that nature is not entirely binary. The first sexual beings to emerge, perhaps 2.5 billion years ago were what biologists call isogamous-somewhere between male and female. Polygenetic types have been identified among some species, such as the cardinal and various other bird species, insects, and crustaceans.

We wake up in our cribs lonely, cut off, severed from the great whole. Sex is a dimension of our

very awareness, and gender is an expression of sexual identity in search of wholeness.

Sexuality

is a sacred energy given us by God to overcome our incompleteness, to move us toward unity and

consummation with that which is beyond us. It is also the pulse to celebrate, to give and to receive delight.

Personhood is the heart of the matter. To be a person is to be an authentic relational being..

"Self" is an ongoing dynamical process, a mini expanding universe open to life. This is why the rainbow aptly symbolizes the freedom and authenticity of the LGBTQ community, because it signifies the desire and hope for the fullness of life. God looks at what God brings into being and sees it

is "very good" because God is the vital core of every being, the invisible mysterious center of personhood who dwells within as fidelity in love, a love so great that every person-gay, straight, trans, bi, queer-is loved uniquely and unconditionally by God.

## 18. Racial and Axial Consciousness

I would like to situate race within the broader framework of axial consciousness.

The pre-axial age marks the emergence of the (human) tribe or the collective, which could extend as

far back as the Neanderthals, to 64,000 BCE. Ancient civilizations looked at the physical and human worlds as interdependent. An imbalance in one sphere could result in an imbalance in the other.

While early humans were closely linked to the cosmos, they were also closely linked to one another..

The sense of the whole was a sense of belonging to a web of life guided by supernatural forces or deities. All things shared the same breath of life-animals, trees, humans all were bound together.

German philosopher Karl Jaspers coined the term Achsenzeit (Axial Age or Axis Age) in 1949 to describe a time between approximately 800 BCE and 200 BCE when the spiritual foundations of modern humanity were established.

The question of race begins with the rise of axial consciousness and the emergence of the human person as individual and autonomous. Axial persons were in possession of their own identity, but the cost of self-identity was the loss of organic relationship to nature and community, severing the harmony with nature and the tribe Psychiatrist Ian McGilchrist speaks of a cognitive split in the ancient brain that can be located in the rise of the axial person. The right brain hemisphere (the dominant hemisphere connected to the wider world) became dissociated from the left hemisphere (the analytical brain). As the lines of consciousness shifted in the axial person, from interconnected wholeness to self-reflective individuality, relationality became distorted in that connection to the wider world of nature was replaced by self-reflection and self-identity. This loss of connection to the wider cosmos had far-reaching consequences that we are experiencing today, including environmental apathy, racism, genderism, consumerism, and political factions..

The first axial individual is coming to an end and giving way to the second axial person, as lines of consciousness shift from the vertical individualism to the horizontal and globalized hyper-connected person. The second axial person is best described as posthuman, a term that signifies the end of the liberal subject modeled on the white European male. The posthuman is not readily identified because there are no real physical changes. What is changing is the level of human Consciousness... The new person emerging in evolution does not differ physically but mentally, that is, by the way he or she thinks about the world. The posthuman is increasingly gender fluid, racially neutral and interspiritual... Gen Y and Gen Z populations, in particular, are oriented toward posthuman life marked by shared being and a deep concern for the earth community, race, and religion.

To put this another way, the mixture of races, genders, and religions is no longer the exception but the norm. We are creating a world of deep relationality because we are being rewired for belonging to the cosmic whole...

A number of years ago, I was teaching Franciscan theology in England and had a group of African Sisters from Nigeria in class. At the final class I asked the students to say a few words on what was meaningful for them in the course. One robust African sister in full habit got up and walked to the front of the class and said, "You have spoken deeply to my heart, and I shall never forget this class." Then she broke into song and the other African sisters joined in. For a moment the entire classroom was lifted up into the most beautiful, magical moment of love; there was a palpable unity in our midst. No longer were we white or black or American or European or African-we were one heart united in the song that burst forth from a heart full of love...