



HAIL

REFLECTIONS ON THE
MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

MARY

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A VULNERABLE GOD

THE TRUE GOD GIVES HIS FLESH AND BLOOD.

—Les Murray

We all have false images and representations of God. These often prevent us from seeing the real God at work in our lives. We actually make things difficult for ourselves and others by not properly appreciating the depths of our own faith. We substitute the wondrous and life-giving mystery of God with something (an idol) that diminishes us.

When, however, we reflect on how the Word was made flesh in the Incarnation we are being asked to hear liberating Good News. God has joined himself to us inseparably.

When Mary presents the infant Jesus in the Temple, the 'overshadowing' presence of God is now fully revealed – not in 'stones', but in a precious child. God loves us so much that he becomes one of us!

This freeing truth is summed up in lines from Les Murray's "The Boys Who Stole the Funeral", where a dead World War I digger cries out: 'the true god gives his flesh and blood. / Idols demand yours off you'.

The latter is what our essentially Calvinist media-driven culture does so effectively when it persuades us to seek revenge. 'Crime and Punishment' is their paradigm and the dominant idol they worship is an avenger.

Never mind that this drives ordinary people to despair. Why? Because to really join the human race ('creaturehood' is the lovely Ignatian term) means to accept oneself as a graced sinner. And even the most virtuous among us graced sinners needs more mercy, not more punishment.

But what does our culture characteristically offer as a response to human evil, frailty, psychopathology and sin? The mantra that is repeated endlessly is 'punishment!' Punish sinners. Punish the boat people. Punish the criminals. Punish the mentally ill. Punish the losers. Punish the different. Get even!

Yes, revenge does feel the appropriate response to evil, especially when vulnerable and innocent persons suffer unjustly.

The only problem is that 'getting even' does not actually work! It never really heals the pain. The 'spiral of violence' goes on and on, taking us down ever more destructive paths.

How different is the merciful God of Jesus of Nazareth presented as a vulnerable babe in the Temple.

I love how Pope Francis talks so powerfully of the mercy of our compassionate God. He recently recalled an encounter of more than 20 years ago with an elderly woman in Buenos Aires, who told him: 'If the Lord did not forgive all, the world would not exist.' Pope Francis said he had wanted to ask her if she had studied at Rome's prestigious Pontifical Gregorian University, because her words reflected the 'wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit: interior wisdom regarding the mercy of God'.

Indeed, biblical scholar Phyllis Trible has taught us that the Hebrew word for mercy is the word for womb, with different vowel points. So mercy, she suggests, is womb-like mother love.

We humans often struggle mightily our whole lives to really accept this love that gives itself so totally. But this is precisely the Good News. Our God becomes a tiny infant—fragile yet divine.

That's right. God is not vindictive or a monster who demands his 'pound of flesh'. Jesus is presented. God is compassion. The presentation of Jesus in the Temple means that the living God is greater (and bigger) than our hearts. (cf. 1 John 3:20).



Ponder...

Consider the false images and representations of God in our world. What material 'idols' stop you from encountering the mystery of God in your life and the world around you?

Who is it that you most struggle to feel compassion for? How does Pope Francis' call for us to "Be merciful, just as the Father is Merciful" challenge you? What might you do to respond?

What does the beautiful image of a 'womb-like' mother love evoke for you and what words/feelings best describe your response?



IF YOU WANT

If you want, the Virgin will come walking down the road
pregnant with the holy, and say,
"I need shelter for the night,
please take me inside your heart, my time is so close."
Then, under the roof of your soul,
you will witness the sublime intimacy,
the divine, the Christ, taking birth forever,
as she grasps your hand for help,
for each of us is the midwife of God, each of us.
Yes there, under the dome of your being
does creation come into existence eternally,
through your womb, dear pilgrim – the sacred womb of your soul,
as God grasps our arms for help:
for each of us is his beloved servant, never far.
If you want, the Virgin will come walking down the street
pregnant with Light and sing.

—St John of the Cross