

Creative **Transformation**

exploring the growing edge of religious life

Volume 12 • Number 1

ISSN 1062-4708

WINTER 2003



*Chaos signifies an infinite
potentiality which may become good
or evil in its actualizations, but is the
'stuff' from which all things come.*

A Publication of Process & Faith, based on a Relational Vision of Reality

Making a Difference

Process & Faith News 1

The Lost Chaos of Creation 2

by Catherine Keller

Patricia's Ponderings: *While the Sun Was Napping* 7

by Patricia Adams Farmer

Process from Our Perspective: 8

St. George's Episcopal Church

by Paul S. Nancarrow

Process in Practice

On Biblical Texts 10

The Womb of Compassion: Reflections on Luke 6:36

by Ronald L. Farmer

On Social Justice 12

Violence, Nonviolence, and the Community of Life

by Douglas Sturm

On Religious Education 14

Discovering Builder-God and Wisdom Woman

by Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore

On Pastoral Care 16

"Every Person" Creativity

by Robert and Adrienne Brizee

On Liturgy 18

Creation as Liturgy: The Ceremonial Dimension of the Cosmos

by Paul S. Nancarrow

On Spirituality 20

Listening to Your Life: Your Life as Lectio Divina

by Bruce G. Epperly

Process Resources

A Homily on Hope 22

by John B. Cobb, Jr.

Critic's Corner: Film: 24

A Beautiful Mind

by Charles Yancey

Critic's Corner: Books 26

Embracing a Beautiful God, by Patricia Adams Farmer

review by Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki

Liturgy: A Baptism Blessing 27

P&F Connections 29

Creative Transformation...

takes its name from the belief of process theologians that God's work is always creative and always transformative; and that wherever creative transformation is occurring, God is there. This means that instead of clinging to past formulations of faith and the ways of action that used to work, we are striving to be co-workers with God by seeking new formulations and more effective ways of action. —John B. Cobb, Jr.

Creative Transformation

exploring the growing edge of religious life

Volume 12:1 **Winter 2003**

Publisher and Editor

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki

Director, Process and Faith

Claremont School of Theology

Contributing Editors

Robert and Adrienne Brizee

Bruce G. Epperly

Patricia Adams Farmer

Ronald L. Farmer

Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore

Paul S. Nancarrow

Douglas Sturm

Managing Editor

Jeanyne B. Slettom

Founding Editor

William A. Beardslee

Creative Transformation . . .

is published quarterly by Process & Faith. Process & Faith seeks ways for people interested in process thought to share ideas and resources, especially in local congregations.

For subscriptions or comments, please address your letters and inquiries to:

PROCESS & FAITH

Editor: Creative Transformation

1325 North College Avenue

Claremont, CA, 91711-3199

909-447-2559

Fax: 909-621-2760

E-mail: faith@ctr4process.org

Web site: www.processandfaith.org

Making a Difference

Process & Faith News

New column

P&F is pleased to announce a new column on social justice, written by Douglas Sturm. Doug is Professor Emeritus of Religion and Political Science, Bucknell University. He is a frequent contributor to this journal and the author of several books, including *Solidarity and Suffering* (SUNY Press, available from P&F for \$21.95/members \$17.56).

Whitehead Film Festival

Starts January 29, not January 30, as previous reported. See page 25 for more information.

New membership categories

P&F has changed from a sliding scale to a basic membership rate of \$35/year (\$20 student/senior) with, of course, opportunities to contribute more! Let us know if you want brochures for your information racks.

Beardslee Consultation

The 2003 consultation will take place May 5, 2003, at Temple Beth Tikva in Fullerton, CA, with the evening discussion open to the public. This year's theme is ecology, and participants will once again come from the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions.

New seminars

By the time you receive this, the first "Creatively Transforming the Church" seminar will have been held. These new seminars, facilitated by Rick Marshall and Paul Lance, P&F Council members, are still in the pilot stage. The first one, focusing on youth ministry, was held January 11 at Seaside Community Church UCC, in Torrance, and the next one, focusing on worship, will take place March 15 at Brea Congregational UCC.

If you would like to attend the March 15 seminar, contact the P&F office: 909.447.2559 or email: faith@ctr4process.org

Summer course

John Cobb and Marjorie Suchocki will team-teach the Theology of Belonging course June 23-27 2003. The format will be as follows:
Morning class, 9-12
Picnic break, 12-2
Feature film, 2-4
Animated discussion of relation between film and class topics, 4-5
Vespers, 5-5:20

Look for more details in the spring issue, or consult the website!

CPS seminars

Many good ones coming up. See the complete list at www.ctr4process.org

P&F Datebook

Feb. 2-4, 2003; **John Cobb and Clark Pinnock** will speak and respond to each other at the University of Calgary. Theme: "The Theology of God's Openness." Contact: dshantz@ucalgary.ca

February 24-25, 2003; **Marjorie Suchocki**: United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, Minneapolis. For more information, call 651.633.4311.

March 14, 2003; **David Griffin**: "Whitehead as a Basis for Spiritual Psychology," California Institute for Integral Studies; 1453 Mission St., San Francisco; at 7 p.m.

April 4, 2003; **Marjorie Suchocki** will give the Lowell Lecture at Boston University School of Theology, and also lecture April 2 at Trinity Church, Boston.

April 11-12, 2003; **John Cobb**: Lectures at Green Lake Church, Seattle, WA.

Conferences

Two Whitehead conferences are scheduled for March 2003 at Claremont School of Theology.

"Schleiermacher and Whitehead: System and Life"
March 6-8, 2003

"Whiteheadian Philosophy and Genuine Religious Pluralism"
March 27-31, 2003

The Lost Chaos of Creation

Catherine Keller



Catherine Keller is professor of constructive theology at Drew University, The Theological School. Her newest book is *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003). She is also the author of *From a Broken Web* and *Apocalypse Now and Then*.

This verse cries out, 'interpret me!'

—Rashi, *Genesis*

According to the mathematical theory of chaos, minute changes can have immense effects. Scientists formulate this principle of complex dynamical systems (such as weather) as: “extreme sensitivity to initial conditions.” Popularized as the butterfly effect, “extreme sensitivity” means that through the interconnections of wind currents and resulting amplifications, the flap of a butterfly’s wing in your town can cause an avalanche in the Himalayas. For me this is a secret lesson in hermeneutics. If we read a numbingly familiar text (like the opening of Genesis) just a bit differently, the entire system can shift. And because the second verse of the Bible is all about a complex chaotic system—and the earth was *tohuwabohu* and darkness was on the face of *tehom* and *ruach elohim* was vibrating over the face of the waters—might this theory of initial conditions not have something to tell us about theological content as well? Translate *tohuwabohu* ‘without form and wild.’ *Tehom* means “deep,” “ocean” and “chaos.” And it was Gunkel who first

translated the oscillating motion of Spirit with the verb “vibrate.” Even these translational minutiae might touch our sensitivities!

Careful though—science cannot dictate terms to faith. But Christianity has always borrowed current cosmologies (such as Aquinas took from Aristotle, while Schleiermacher, Barth and Bultmann presupposed modern Newtonian mechanism). We just don’t want to get stuck in modern assumptions about the universe that are passe and predictable, reducing the universe to something outside of us and outside of God, and reinforcing deadheaded polarizations like “evolution” vs. “creation.” I don’t even want us to absorb a cosmology: just a metaphoric clue from the avowedly non-reductionist, *postmodern* science of complexity.

But what use is a clue without a mystery? Let me suggest that Gen. 1:2 poses not only a mystery, but a murder and motive. Let us call the mystery: *the case of the missing chaos*. Historically, this verse virtually disappeared from theology by the fourth century. When it begins to reappear about a hundred years ago, it does so in strangely hostile, nonbiblical

ways. Why? And why does it matter? Because beginnings matter: and Genesis continues to materialize disproportionate effects. Not because it gives a pseudoscientific account of the origin of things, but because—with an intuition only now achieved by science—it poetically channels that “extreme sensitivity to initial conditions.” But I meet more pastors who get the relevance of this new science than theologians.

How did the chaos get lost? In a nutshell: it got swept under the carpet of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. Theologians keep declaring that this creation by the Word from absolute nothing is the evident meaning of the Bible. Yet there is *no such biblical teaching*: not in Genesis, not elsewhere. At most God “calls into being the things that are not” [Rom. 4:17]—which posits a strong sense of God as creator of newness [cf. Heb. 11:3; 2 Mac. 7:28; John 1:1 for the other quotations used to back up the *ex nihilo*]. Biblical texts may ignore or dread the chaos, but they never contradict the chaotic initial conditions obtaining “when God created.”

Of course *ex nihilo* solved a hermeneutical problem: if there is something already when God creates, does this not constrain divine omnipotence? Or posit a dualistic or di-theistic system? Ironically, it was the Christian Gnostic Basilides who invented the doctrine of creation from absolutely nothing. Irenaeus then made it a touchstone of *orthodox*

Christianity. While most would skip over the verse, Augustine creatively struggles with it, even arguing for “multiple true interpretations.” Yet his solution, that the chaos is the first stage of creation, seemed just as problematic. Barth called the verse a “veritable *crux*

*This would be
bad news for
women. The
primal feminine
waters reflect the
salt waters of the
womb; the
warrior-ethos is
based on a cosmic
matricide.*

interpretum”—for how can God create chaos, if creating is *ordering*? And why creation of heaven and earth land in the *first* verse, when they occur only on the *second* and *third* day, respectively? No wonder theology put the lid on its *tehom*!

It got out again: just in time for the twentieth century, with its devastating mix of creative and destructive chaos. Gunkel

absorbed for “Old Testament” studies the shock of new discoveries of mythological antecedents for creation from primal waters. The Babylonian *Enuma Elish* presented eerie parallels of structure—the sequence is too close for coincidence. And then there emerged the etymological link of *tehom* to *Tiamat*, the Sumerian-semitic term for the watery chaos. No wonder the feminine *tehom* is used without an article, like a proper name. It alludes to Tiamat: who “before anything was named” mingled her waters with her mate “Apsu.” From them the gods precipitate. But Apsu wants to kill the noisy grandchildren (“I want to sleep!”) he protests in agony; the grandchildren kill him first. Immersed in the mythic version of clinical depression, Tiamat then gets in touch with her anger. Breeding monsters, she morphs into the image of evil. The great warrior Marduk, chief god of Babylon, becomes Lord through his gory slaughter of Grand Mother. From her carcass he constructs the universe, in the sequence that Genesis echoes.

Is *tehom* a priestly allusion to Tiamat, and Marduk to Yahweh? Appalled, Barth himself decided that the second verse does not refer to God’s Spirit at all, but that this “impotent bird” fluttering over “sterile waters” is a parody of mythology, of the “monstrous world” of chaos to which God said “No” from the beginning. But others took the unveiled mythic chaos more

Making a Difference

seriously. They draw on divine warrior motifs (especially in Isaiah and Psalms) to make a strong case that (a) God is a divine warrior (b) the chaos is evil itself and (c) God creates and redeems not from nothing but from the struggle with the chaos [Cross, Batto, Levenson]. In other words they discover in Gen. 1:2 a quiet replay of creation by murder. Is *this* the mystery of the lost chaos? Is it hidden because it echoes this bloody warrior myth?

This would be bad news for women. The primal feminine waters reflect the salt waters of the womb; the warrior-ethos is based on a cosmic matricide. We acknowledge that the Hebrews absorbed the patriarchy of the environment; that its monotheism

therefore inevitably made God male; that the divine warrior does recur in the Bible, indeed preeminently in the Apocalypse. There Tiamat the horror of Babylon is represented by the Whore of Babylon; and salvation means “no more sea.” Is a kind of sexist tehomophobia what an honest exegesis reveals?

A third way exists. Rashi, the eleventh century Jewish interpreter, insisted that Gen. 1 is not a sentence, but a dependent clause: (1) *As* in the beginning God was creating the heaven and the earth (2)—*then* the earth was *tobwabobu* and the darkness upon the face of the deep and the spirit of God was moving on the waters— (3) then God said, ‘let there be light.’ Rashi’s inference?

The “*the text does not intend to point out the order of the acts of Creation—to state that these (heaven and earth) were created first.*” [Pentateuch with . . . Rashi’s Commentary, Heb Pub Co NY, 2f]. So the translation itself breaks up the idea of a linear sequence. Already a bit of syntactical turbulence disturbs what Westermann had lauded as “the effective monotone” of the account. Several recent translations follow Rashi [NRSV; New Jewish]. But interpreters also note that once the linear order is broken up, the entire process of creation reads as co-creation—God has the waters and the earth after all do their own producing [v. 20,24]; and calls the “great sea monsters”—Job’s

Creation Stories

From China

In the beginning there was chaos. Out of it came pure light and built the sky. The heavy dimness, however, moved and formed the earth from itself. Sky and earth brought forth the ten thousand creations . . . and all of them take the sky and earth as their mode. The roots of Yang and Yin—the male and female principle—also began in the sky and earth.

(The Yellow Emperor)

From Greece

Before the ocean was, or earth, or heaven, Nature was all alike, a shapelessness, Chaos, so-called, all ruse and lumpy matter, Nothing but bulk, inert, in whose confusion Discordant atoms warred: there was no sun To light the universe; there was no moon . . .

Whatever god it was, who out of chaos
Brought order to the universe, and gave it
Division, subdivision, he molded earth,
In the beginning, into a great globe . . .
(Ovid, *Metamorphosis*)

From India

When neither Being nor Not-being was
Nor atmosphere, nor firmament, nor what is beyond.
What did it encompass? Where? In whose protection?
What was water, the deep, unfathomable?
Neither death nor immortality was there then,
No sign of night or day.
That One breathed, windless, by its own energy;
Nought else existed then.
In the beginning was darkness swathed in darkness;
All this was but unmanifested water . . .
(Rig-Veda X)

Leviathan— good! Might we sense here the survival of a *tehomophilic* tradition?

Then feel again the intimate vibration of God the Spirit upon the face of the deep: no polytheistic regression, but a repudiation of the warrior-model and its oppressive Order. Does *tehom* signify an unrealized depth of reality, an infinite potentiality—which may become good or evil in its actualizations, but is the ‘stuff’ from which all things come? But then how does complex order arise from such chaos? Some chaos theorists refer to “the irony of turbulence”: Chaos—which is *not disorder* but a complex pattern of turbulent fragmentation—seems to arise from “the system’s *infinitely deep interconnectedness* [Briggs &

Peat, *Turbulent Mirror*, 52].”

Might we imagine *tehom* as the very depth of God? Not identical with God—who as the trinity

*Once the linear
order is broken
up, the entire
process of creation
reads as
co-creation.*

teaches is internally complex, precisely as interconnected—but as the Other in God’s self, like the Godhead of the mystics?

Over our heads but not out of our depths? Can such a theology of complexity outgrow the violent certainties and exclusions of much “simple faith?” Might we live more creatively with the inner and outer chaos—the uncertainty, unpredictability, turbulence and complexity—of our own lives? Our souls, our sexualities? Our communities? Our cultures? Created in the image of God—can our spirits learn again to vibrate with wisdom on the waters? Perhaps after all this is not a mystery to solve but to live with. Perhaps we may participate in the mystery—not of a *creatio ex nihilo* but of a *creatio ex profundis*.

Some foolish men declare that Creator made the world. The doctrine that the world was created is ill-advised, and should be rejected. If God created the world, where was he before creation? If you say he was transcendent then, and needed no support, where is he now? . . .

Know that the world is uncreated, as time itself is, without beginning and end, and is based on the principles, life and the rest. Uncreated and indestructible, it endures under the compulsion of its own nature, divided into three sections—hell, earth, and heaven.

(*Mahapurana*)

From North America

In the beginning nothing was here where the world now stands; there was no ground, no earth—nothing but Darkness, Water, and Cyclone. There were no people living . . . It was a lonely place.

(Apache)

From Central America

This is the account of how all was in suspense, all calm, in silence; all motionless, still, and the expanse of the sky was empty. This is the first narrative . . .
(Maya, *Popul Vuh*)

From Australia

In the very beginning everything was resting in perpetual darkness: night oppressed all the earth like an impenetrable thicket. The gurra ancestor—his name was Karora—was lying asleep in everlasting night . . .
(Aranda)

From the Pacific Islands

Io dwelt within breathing-space of immensity. The Universe was in darkness, with water everywhere. There was no glimmer of dawn, no clearness, no light. And he began by saying these words,—
That he might cease remaining inactive:
“Darkness, become a light-possessing darkness.”
And at once light appeared . . .

(Maori, *The Myth of Io*)

Making a Difference

Excerpt from Face of the Deep: Tehomic homily: waves

The following is excerpted with permission from Keller's new book, *Face of the Deep* (London: Routledge, 2003) 214. It is available from *Process & Faith* for \$25.95/members \$20.26.

“Why are you so cowardly? You still don’t trust, do you?” (Mark 4:35ff.). So grumbled the one awakened from his nap “on a cushion” in the stern. The wind is howling, “the boat was already filling.” He is not annoyed with the sea or the storm, however, but with his tehomophobic friends. Recall that phobia is not just fear, which warns of a danger. Phobia signifies the obsessive reiteration of fear, which cripples the ability to face the fear. We glean from Jesus’ irritation that the opposite of faith (*pistis*, “trust”) is not doubt, but *cowardice*. Faith here signifies a trust that is kin to courage. It cannot be identified with belief, with knowledge, with any stash of propositions. It does not then expect God to calm the waters for us. God “lets us” do it ourselves. *Bear* the fruit, *use* the talent, *heal* the sick, *feed* the hungry, *uncover* the flame, *make* the peace. There may be no life-saver there next time. Those who follow this activating gospel have been variously suspected of Judaizing, gnosticism, Arianism, Pelagianism, atheism, socialism or feminism. Still the tehomic grace left traces all along:

*Don't cry to God
The spring is in you
Don't block the opening
and it will flow right through.*¹ (Silesius)

This do-it-yourself message (is it mystical or activist? can we afford the binary?) has little to do with the self-sufficiency of a lonely ego. Masterful

self-enclosure—as surely as cringing dependency—would block the “flow-through.” Thus Marduk’s ego was produced by the phobia of his comrades. The resultant systems of injustice, compounds of control and greed, enact “sin” from a tehomic perspective. The “original sin”

would be first of all a *blockage*: a habitual obstruction of the originary flow.

Since theologians belong among the original sinners, I have in penance diagnosed the *creatio ex nihilo* as the symptom of a systemic obstruction. At the very site of its originative nonorigin, the flow of flows, the ocean

of springs, got linguistically frozen. God’s omnipotence was accordingly shored up to replace human responsibility for the world, while Christian morality was left to monitor bodily openings and effluvia. An orderly fear of God quietly superseded the dead Jew’s tehomic courage. (Do theophobia and tehomophobia then merge?) As for this Jew, the great de-clogging agent, he was rewritten as the only-and-for-all of the settled past. “Christ” was then deployed to restrict divine incarnation to the singularity—thus blocking out, keeping outside our finite bodies, the very one to whom we cry?

1. Angelus Silesius, *Der Himmel is in dir: Von der Seelenlust mystischer Froemigkeit* (Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1986) 55. [Keller’s translation.]

Graphic illustration by Graham Annable.



Patricia's Ponderings While the Sun Was Napping

Patricia Adams Farmer

*Keep your faith in all beautiful things;
in the sun when it is hidden,
in the Spring when it is gone.*
—Roy R. Gibson



On this November day of my fall vacation, the sun was napping and dark clouds gathered. But still, there was a goldenness radiating from the center of the city park, a perfect tree standing out among the other trees like a candle in the dark. It seemed to be lit from within the center of itself.

It drew me in, away from the neat concrete pathway, and so I left the other walkers on their way to shops and cafes nearby and tread boldly onto the grass that led down to the trees, the leaves, and all the fun. Yellow reddish leaves that looked like a truckload of pink lady apples strewn about crunched and crackled under my sensible shoes that I had very sensibly chosen for this afternoon walk in a new city. My flat, comfy penny loafers, which take me to work each day and home again, now took me deep into the lush leaves of this alluring tree, until they could be seen no more.

I was besotted. All sensibility vanished with my shoes. I was no longer on my way to dazzling windows full of things to buy, but ankle deep in November's charm

and especially in the grip of this particular tree.

Beauty is so distracting at times.

When I arrived at the tree, it was no less mystifying than it was from afar. Not like some things—you know what I mean—things that look alluring from a distance, but up close they reveal flaws and shabbiness and lead only to disappointment. No, not this tree. The glory of it left me utterly motionless for a bit. Only my eyes moved to watch it letting go of its fullness with such gentleness. Tiny leaf kites floating through the crispy air.

I gathered the most perfect leaves as if picking up shells on the seashore. I handled them as if they were made of delicate glass and worth a good hundred dollars each. Putting them neatly in a flat pocket of my purse, I felt like a child about to press my leaves in between waxed paper. And perhaps I would do that still as my most precious remembrance of this new place.

The seemingly inner radiance of the golden tree on a dreary day

had brought me here—not against my will—but attuned to my deepest nature that seeks beauty—even to distraction—and a sense of connection to the universe. And once I arrived I was washed clean in its radiance.

Not far off a little girl with dark hair was being buried in leaves by her big sister and mother, and there was rolling, crunching, hollering, and laughing. Leaves floating willy nilly into the apple crisp air teases one let loose and play!

And it all happened while the sun was napping.

There is a darkness in the world. And it is growing. There is nowhere to hide, so we may need to spend more time with trees all lit up and golden. And people at play, and a hundred colors at our feet. We need all this to remind us that we are not alone in the dark but are part of something that is bright and beautiful, still.

Part of the earth, part of God.

Part of hope.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

—John 1:5

Process from Our Perspective

St. George's Episcopal Church

Paul S. Nancarrow



Process theology makes a difference to St. George's Episcopal Church in three kinds of ways.

The first way is through teaching opportunities where, as pastor, I can say explicitly, "This is a process-theological idea." In Advent of 2001, for instance, I taught a class in prayer using Marjorie Suchocki's *In God's Presence* as the principal resource. People in the course were used to thinking of prayer as a way of growing in communion with God; but it was something new to them to be introduced to the idea that God uses our prayers as resources for good in the world. I shared with them the process idea that God works with the world as it is to bring the world to what it can be; and the idea that our praying adds something—goodwill, thanksgiving, agapeic love—to

the world that wasn't there before, something in the world that God can work with to open up new possibilities for good. Several people who were in that class became very interested in process thought, and at their suggestion I am now teaching a whole course in introductory process theology. In other words, for some members of the parish, process theology is becoming a way of thinking about God that can be talked about by name.

A second way process theology makes a difference is more subtle and far-ranging; that is, I use process ideas in preaching or pastoral care or conversation, without explicitly pausing and saying, "You know, this comes from process theology" or "I read about this in Hartshorne." For instance, one of the things that really got me hooked on process theology when I first encountered it in college was the way it allowed me to think about the Christian doctrine of redemption. I was struck by Whitehead's lines from *Process and Reality* that God "uses what in the temporal world is mere wreckage," and that God has "a tender care that nothing be lost." I understood this to mean that God can open the way to new possibilities for good even in things that seem to all earthly

appearances to be nothing but wreckage and loss, and, in explicitly Christian terms, I could then understand the cross and resurrection of Jesus as the archetypal and definitive transformation of wreckage into new life. For me, this was a whole new way to think of redemption: not just as God's judicial dismissal of the charges against us, not just as a cleansing from stain by means of a blood sacrifice, but as an actual change in the routes of becoming open to human life—*my* human life, my friends' human lives—through the creative, transformative work of God. The process idea helped me to understand redemption as moving from "Why did this bad thing have to happen?" to "What new way toward good will God open next?" It made the doctrine of redemption a way of focusing not just on the sin of the past that has led to wreckage and loss, but on the promise of a future that takes up that loss and makes it the beginning of a greater good. This understanding of redemption has been a constitutive part of my faith ever since.

Not long ago a family in our parish was confronted with the suicide of a family member. Their grief, confusion, anger, and loss were very profound and very

difficult. I shared with them in our pastoral conversations, and in the sermon at the funeral, my understanding of redemption, my belief that in God nothing is lost, my faithful hope that with God there are always new possibilities that take us beyond the wreckage we see now to a transformation in compassion and love. I didn't use technical process jargon, of course, and I did not try to take their grief away from them too soon; but whenever I could, I spoke of turning the question from "Why this?" to "What next?" Weeks after the event, one of the family members told me how much that idea of redemption had meant to her, how much it had given her a pathway through grief.

There have been many instances of this sort, where my own process approach to faith and theology has come through my preaching and pastoral care, and as such has been taken up by members of the parish and has made a difference in their prayer and understanding. These ideas may not always be explicitly labeled as process thought, but they do form part of our congregation's shared faith.

A third way that process makes a difference for us at St. George's is in our practice and the shape of our community life together. Process theology emphasizes God's lure to us, the aims God gives to the moments of our experience, God's ongoing call to to grow into new possibilities as they are given to us from the superjective nature of God. This

means that one criterion we can use for making decisions, planning actions, and conducting our institutional life together, is to look for the new possibilities taking shape in our midst and to ask how God is calling us to richness of experience and depth of love and creative transformation in those possibilities.

That principle applies to an important transition our parish is going through at this time. For

These ideas may not always be explicitly labeled as process thought, but they do form part of our congregation's shared faith.

three or four decades now, St. George's has had a perception of itself as a parish composed mostly of young nuclear families whose main reason for belonging to the church is that they enjoy each other's social company. With time and demographic shifts, however, that self-perception is no longer very accurate. We are now some empty-nesters and retirees, and some very active and dedicated younger families, and some extended, blended, and stepfamilies; and people have a variety of reasons for attending, of which belonging to the same social circle is only one. That disconnect between our perception

and our actuality can be uncomfortable, and there are two sorts of ways we could respond to it. We could worry about why the church is changing and try to rebuild the way things used to be; or we could acknowledge the new factors in our situation and look for the new possibilities, the new ways to be lured into God's envisaged future, that are given to us in our situation. We've had our share of responding in the first way; but we have also had some leaders in the parish who have begun to take steps to discover who we *really* are, not just who we think we are, and who is in our neighborhood and community, and how we might discern new possibilities for mission and ministry to which God may be luring us now. To be sure, this willingness to look at changes in our identity is not solely the result of learning to think in process terms; there are many factors of organizational character and leadership style that go into that mix. But the fact that we are discovering process thought, in both explicit and implicit ways, certainly contributes to the way we as a parish frame the question of who we are and who we are called to become.

What process means to us, then, is a particular "school" of theology to study, a running theme in preaching and pastoral care and prayer, and a principle for practice and decision-making. On all these levels, I think process-relational theologizing is making positive differences in the faith and life of our congregation.

Process in Practice

The Womb of Compassion: Reflections on Luke 6:36

Ronald L. Farmer

Babe Ruth, who hit 714 home runs during his baseball career, was playing one of his last major league games. He was with the Braves at this time and was playing the Reds in Cincinnati.

The Babe was no longer as agile as he had once been; indeed, he fumbled the ball and threw badly that day. In one inning alone his errors were responsible for most of the five runs scored by the Reds. As he headed toward the dugout at the end of the embarrassing inning, a crescendo of boos washed over him.

Just then a boy jumped over the railing and ran onto the playing field. With tears streaming down his face, he threw his arms around the legs of his hero. Ruth didn't hesitate for a second. He picked up the boy, hugged him, and set him down on his feet, patting his head.

The booing ceased immediately and a profound hush fell over the ballpark. In those brief moments the fans saw two heroes: Ruth, who in spite of his dismal day on the diamond, could still care about a small boy; and a boy who cared about the feelings of another human being.

I find this story remarkable for the questions it raises. Why was it

that, although they all witnessed the same events on the field, most of the fans in the stands booed the legendary player, whereas the boy ran onto the field in tears, throwing his arms around Ruth? What character trait did the boy possess that the other spectators lacked?

In a word, that character trait is compassion. As the Latin roots of our English word make clear, compassion means, "to feel with" another (from *com* = with, and *pati* = to feel or to suffer). It is similar to the English word sympathy, which is derived from Greek roots also meaning, "to feel with" (from *sym* = with, and *pathos* = to feel or to suffer). To be compassionate, then, is to feel the feelings of another, to be affected by whatever affects another—a theme at the very heart of process thought! Compassion is much more than an external wave of emotion, a feeling from the outside, so to speak. On the contrary, compassion is the conscious identification with another until one feels things as the other feels them—from the inside.

This is precisely what some people not only fail to do but actually attempt to avoid doing. Indeed, many of the ancient

Greek philosophers considered compassion to be a mark of weakness. If you were compassionate, they said, this meant that others would affect you; you would not be immovable or self-sufficient. The ancient Hebrews, however, not only viewed compassion as a human virtue, they also understood it to be an attribute of God. Jesus took this line of thinking a step further. He not only agreed that compassion is a virtue; he said it is the heart of religion. He not only said that compassion is a divine attribute; he said it is God's chief attribute. Nowhere is Jesus' remarkable teaching expressed more forcefully than in Luke 6:36. He took the ancient Jewish statement of the essence of religion—"Be ye holy as God is holy"—and interpreted holiness in terms of compassion: "Be ye compassionate as God is compassionate."

Why did Jesus feel the need to reinterpret the notion of divine holiness? In Jesus' day most religious people understood holiness in terms of ritual purity, which resulted in structuring society in terms of a "purity system." According to Marcus Borg, a purity system establishes sharp social boundaries between pure and impure, whole and not-

whole, rich and poor, male and female, Jew and Gentile. The message and activity of Jesus challenged the purity system at its most fundamental level.

Instead of affirming “Be pure as God is pure,” Jesus said, “Be compassionate as God is compassionate.” In a social world whose core value was purity, Jesus advocated an alternative social vision whose core value is compassion.

Now, to view God as compassionate and to understand the religious life in terms of compassion is quite different from what have (unfortunately) been the dominant images of God and the religious life. One of the more common images of God is that of a stern Law-giver and Judge who has established certain ethical requirements that humans must follow. Such a view of God logically leads to understanding the religious life primarily as an attempt to measure up to these requirements—a lifestyle that results in an inevitable division between those who do measure up (or think they do) and those who do not, a division between the righteous (or self-righteous) and sinners.

Perhaps it would help us grasp—or rather, be grasped by—Jesus’ vision if we were to examine the Hebrew word for compassion, the word Jesus would have had in mind when he uttered Luke 6:36. The most commonly used Hebrew word for compassion is derived from a root meaning “womb.” Thus, to be compas-

sionate is to be womb-like. What the womb is to a developing fetus, compassion is to those who receive it—“life-giving, nourishing, caring.”

Compassion is more than a feeling; it is a feeling that manifests itself in a distinctive way of living. Frequently the gospels writers remark that Jesus was moved with compassion, and in each case his compassion manifested itself in an action designed to alleviate suffering and promote well-being: he healed the blind, cleansed the leprous, taught the ignorant, raised the dead, and fed the hungry.

When we act compassionately, our compassion becomes a womb for others. Our compassion nurtures them, cares for them, embraces them. In a very real sense, then, our compassion creates the environment that enables them to be “reborn.” When we are grasped by this profound biblical metaphor—a metaphor that aptly expresses the process vision of life—the power of creative transformation is unleashed in the world.

RONALD L. FARMER is Dean of the Wallace All Faiths Chapel and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Chapman University in Orange, CA. He may be reached at rfarmer@chapman.edu

When we act compassionately, our compassion becomes a womb for others. Our compassion nurtures them, cares for them, embraces them. In a very real sense, then, our compassion creates the environment that enables them to be “reborn.”

Violence, Nonviolence, and the Community of Life

Douglas Sturm

I. America—more specifically, the United States of America—was born in violence. That proposition cannot, I believe, be gainsaid. In recent decades, we have become ever more fully aware than before of many ways in which the “New World” came into being through doing violence to millions of peoples—to indigenous, enslaved, immigrant peoples, as well as to women and children. The stories of these peoples need to be rehearsed repeatedly lest we romanticize our history to glorify our identity, a mighty temptation during times when a simplified form of patriotism dominates the passions of the land in angry opposition to those identified as our enemy.

We need to recognize that the United States remains at the present time very much a violent nation, domestically as well as internationally. In a recent column in *The New York Times* (October 28, 2002), Bob Herbert, reacting to a raft of random attacks on innocent citizens by snipers in the D.C. area bemoans that fact.

The nation is saturated with violence. Thousands upon thousands of murders are committed each year. There are more than 200 million guns in circulation. Murder is so routine, including the killing of children, it

doesn't even warrant serious news coverage in most cases. We don't know what to do about all this violence. We don't know how to process it. We sensationalize it, glamorize it, eroticize it.

The nation is saturated with violence . . . we don't know how to process it. We sensationalize it, glamorize it, eroticize it.

In his complaint, Herbert does not merely go after the immediate perpetrators of violent crime. He points an accusatory finger at us all, remarking that, across this land, we “have tolerated, encouraged, even embraced a culture of such violence and relentless dehumanization” that daily murders tend to mean little to us but an ephemeral story. We have created, he implies, a pervasive culture of violence such that, despite a sometimes

indignant response to especially egregious violent acts, we seem satisfied to give support to that more encompassing climate of violence out of which those acts erupt. And that, he suggests, exacerbates and deepens the wrong. In fact, I suspect most of us, if asked directly, would reply that violence is wrong—at least, usually wrong—even as we may, in ways explicit and implicit, perpetuate that wrong.

By itself, however, that reply begs two important, but controversial questions. First, a question of identification: what are the characteristics that qualify an action or culture as violent? Second, a question of moral judgment: why do we think violence is wrong? These questions are not unrelated. Indeed, I mean to suggest that a relational perspective on the meaning of life bears on how we might ponder both of these questions and should force us to consider the tradition of nonviolence as an alternative way of life, a way productive of a culture of peace, but a way that would require us to rethink, in radical ways, how we conduct our lives on all levels, personal and political.

II. Amidst a plethora of efforts to define the marks of violence, we

may isolate two as distinctive points on a spectrum of possibilities. First, in everyday conversation we usually think of violence as the use of physical force to do injury to other persons, to their property, perhaps to animals. Cases, particularly those whose impact is vivid, are obvious: rape, assault, murder, mutilation, torture. When blood spills, when a victim screams, when a body is broken, when anguish and agony are evident—we are quick to declare that violence has been done, that those victimized have been injured, that the resultant suffering and injustice run contrary to fundamental moral principles. We are, after all, charged by a long-standing moral intuition to do no harm. Violence, within the framework of this minimalist understanding, is the intentional doing of harm through physical intervention. It is a form of interaction between self and other during moments of conflicting desires through which the life of the other is seriously deprived if not utterly nullified.

Upon reflection, however, it seems clear that many kinds of conflictual interaction have similar effect and might properly be considered violent, ranging from the severe psychic damage done to youngsters through degrading language and gesture to the economic and cultural deprivation of masses of people resulting from systemic unemployment and abiding poverty. Violence, that is, is both physical and psychological; it is

both interpersonal and institutional. It may be blatant and overt, but it may also be subtle and covert. It cuts across spheres of private life and public life. It is present in domiciles and classrooms. It is caused by those economic systems and political policies whose operations emanate in the needless suffering of some peoples for the presumed benefit of others. It is even built into the highly sophisticated ways we have constructed to resolve our problems—through law enforcement (with its threats of deprivation for purposes of social control), capital investment (with its preeminent concern for the bottom-line to the exclusion of all other considerations), military defense (with its highly sophisticated technologies designed to wage war against those considered a threat to national security). If violence is a moral concern, then surely all these kinds of structural violence must be considered as much of a moral concern as interpersonal violence.

Once we extend, as I believe we should, our understanding of violence to encompass these more structural and cultural dimensions, we need to reframe our definition of violence accordingly, particularly if our comprehension of life is informed by a relational perspective. Violence, from this angle, specifies any kind of action or inaction—physical or psychological, personal or institutional—that obstructs the flourishing of the ongoing community of life. Given this definition, violence

Violence is harmful to the ongoing adventure of life and, as such, is wrong, even when invoked as an allegedly legitimate means of defense or social control.

Continued on page 28

Discovering Builder-God and Wisdom-Woman

Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore

I have just returned from my cousin's funeral, where I was freshly confronted with the power of creation—both in my cousin's life and in the God whom he worshipped. George was a farmer who loved the land and worked side-by-side with his father and children and children-in-law. He was a leader in his Texas community, taught Sunday school, and built up the schools, gin, and farming operations in his community. George's wife Sharon called him "a builder—always building something in his shop or in the community." With his "carpenter's eye," he could see things that no one else could see; he often saw possibilities in people whom others ignored. George's daughter Susan said, "He was always trying to make things better, always asking 'what if' so that he would not settle for something that was not quite right." She concluded, "If you needed to move a mountain, he was your man."

George points to realities of God and God's creation that are often overlooked when Christian theology centers on sin and redemption. George points to the Builder-God of the second creation story (Genesis 2:4b-25) and the Wisdom-Woman of Proverbs (8:22-36). Similarly, George points to the importance of educating people as builders and wise sages. Teaching

cannot be limited to the sinfulness of human nature and graciousness of God; it cannot focus only on the limits of human understanding and abundance of God's wisdom. Education is an opportunity to uncover wonders of the Builder-God and Wisdom-Woman, and to invite people into active partnership (as co-creators or co-carpenters) with God.

Uncovering the Builder-God and Wisdom-Woman

In Genesis, we see God forming a man from dust and breathing his own breath into the man's nostrils. God plants a garden with trees and a river running through it. Then, God places the man in the garden "to till it and keep it" (2:15). With instructions to the man about what to eat and what not to eat, God looks once again with his "carpenter's eye," and decides that the man needs a helper and partner. God thus creates animals to roam the field and sky. Still seeing a need and still longing to make creation better, God takes a rib from the man when he is sleeping and makes a woman to be his partner. When the man awakens, he recognizes this woman as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (22-23). In this narrative, we see the Builder-God, not judging and forgiving, but return-

ing to the creative process again and again to make creation better.

Turning to Proverbs, we discover the underplayed (mostly ignored) role of Sophia Wisdom in the work of creation. God created Sophia in the beginning as a first act of creation; thus, Wisdom-Woman was present when God created springs of water, mountains and hills, earth and fields, heavens and the deep, limits to the sea, and foundations of the earth (22-29). Sophia was beside God like a "master worker" or "little child"—delighting God, rejoicing before God, and rejoicing in God's creation (30-31). The image of Sophia is one of apprentice, co-worker, and joyful enthusiast. The text ends with encouraging readers to listen to Wisdom-Woman and follow her ways, for hers is the way to happiness, life, and favor with God (32-36).

These biblical images are not alone in pointing to the Builder-God and Wisdom-Woman. The Builder-God is reflected in many actions of Jesus, who continually looked at the world and sought ways to make it better. One striking example is his healing of the bent-over woman. Jesus sees the woman across the synagogue where he is teaching and realizes that she is crippled by a spirit of long duration (eighteen years). He

calls to the woman and sets her free from her ailment, thus initiating a controversy about healing on the Sabbath day (Luke 13:10-17). Here we see the Builder-God looking around at the world and seeing something in this woman that others cannot see—the possibility of healing. Longing to heal the woman, Jesus acts and then faces the controversy that follows.

The image of Builder-God also involves looking to the future. God, with a “carpenter’s eye,” is able to look at the world and see new possibilities. In Luke’s Gospel, we find a familiar text with a future-orientation that is often missed. A woman with a twelve-year hemorrhage interrupts Jesus’ journey by touching the hem of his garment. This woman has violated purity laws by her act, but her sinfulness is not the center of this story. The center is her healing and the future toward which it points. With the touch of Jesus’ garment, the woman is immediately healed; however, when Jesus discovers who has touched him, he says, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace” (Luke 8:48). A better translation of the last words would be: “*Go into shalom.*” Jesus did not send the woman out as a perfected person. Truly, she was healed, but Jesus wanted more for her. He claimed her as a child of God (“Daughter”) whose faith had made her well; then, he sent her INTO SHALOM (wholeness).

Just as the Builder-God is evident when we uncover biblical texts, so we hear echoes of Wisdom-Woman in other biblical texts.

Most obviously, we meet Wisdom again in the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . ” (1:1-5). John does not associate wisdom with a woman, as in Proverbs; for John, the Word is Jesus Christ. For Elizabeth Johnson and other theologians, however, John’s “Word” is related to Proverbs’ “Wisdom,” thus identifying Jesus with Sophia. The word associations are real, and the uncovering process is one of the ongoing educational adventures.

Inviting people into partnership

Educational challenges do not end with uncovering. They also include inviting, inspiring, and encouraging partnership. The word partnership echoes the Genesis 2 story of God creating partners for the first person; it also echoes the partnership between God and Wisdom in the Proverbs story of creation. Partnership here is not a sweet idea, but a binding relationship with joy and responsibility. Consider the first man’s delight in discovering the woman who was “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” Consider Wisdom’s delight in the Lord, and the Lord’s delight in her. Consider the responsibilities given to the first people—to till the garden and eat only what God permitted. Consider the responsibilities of Wisdom-Woman to dispense wisdom and instructions for living. These are exciting and demanding relationships.

Where does this point educationally? One can find significant direction for teaching in the life

of my cousin, who loved the land, and in biblical texts of creation.

Seeing possibilities that others do not see: As God kept tinkering with creation, and as George saw possibilities that others missed, so teachers are called to recognize and bring forth new possibilities in the human community and in the land where their community dwells.

Delighting: Teachers are also called to delight in God, their Creator, and in other people, who are “bone of their bones and flesh of their flesh.”

Working alongside: As George worked alongside his father and children, and as Wisdom-Woman worked alongside God, so teachers are called to work alongside others. They are partners and also mentors who inspire partnership in others.

Building: As God built the Creation from dust and water, and as George looked with his carpenter’s eye on the things around him, so teachers are called to look at the world and try to make it better. They are not only partners with God and one another; they are co-carpenters.

Bearing wisdom: As Wisdom-Woman was with God from the beginning of creation and bears God’s wisdom throughout the ages, so teachers are called to bear wisdom. They share God’s wisdom, not for the sake of demonstrating their superiority, but for the sake of nourishing others toward life and favor with God.

May this creative process of teaching and learning have no end!

"Every Person" Creativity

Robert and Adrienne Brizee

Toby is experiencing growing tension in his marriage, the heavy demands of his job and its possible loss through downsizing, the conflict with his increasingly independent teenage son, a bothersome ongoing acid stomach, the recent loss of many dollars in stock market investments, the worry that his specialized Army reserve unit will be called to active duty, and the pain of watching his respected father increasingly lose his memory.

Toby is at the center of these relationships and many more! For many hours of the day most of these relationships are present yet outside his awareness. His relationships are many, complex, and often unconscious. He may wish for simplicity, but there is none to be found.

Conventional wisdom tells us that to be creative one must be a renowned musician, artist, or poet. In contrast, we affirm that creativity is an everyday event of every person. Our theology states that we are composed of our relationships, a proposal which can be both good and bad news. Relationships can bring us intense enrichment and numbing immobilization. Most of us have had both experiences.

Through the example of Toby we can look conceptually at how we are *constituted by our relationships*.

As a person, psyche, soul, self, or an "I," we are a creative process, the content of which is relationships. We feel and receive relationships, blend them together, order them in terms of their relevance for this moment, and finally shape them into our unique response. It is like the Tillamook Cheese factory in Oregon. All the ingredients are transported to the factory where they are processed into a variety of cheeses. A different combination of ingredients yields different varieties of cheese. So we, likewise, make something out of what is given to us. We have both process and content.

If one by one our relationships were taken away, all that would finally remain would be this creative process. This is a positive way of saying what we are *not*, that is, a contained self with certain given and inherent qualities which moves through time unchanged by all that we encounter.

A person as a process is infused with, intersected by, intertwined with, made up of, or constituted by relationships from the very, very small to the very, very large; from those with physical attributes to those which are ethereal. Technically speaking we are related to occasions of experience and societies of occasions found in four major relationships: the world, our past, our body, and God.

If we were to attempt to draw a picture of our relationships we would probably begin with those who are persons like us, having a center of awareness and creativity. Then we would depict the multitude of other entities with various degrees of awareness, after which we would sketch in social institutions and culture. Finally, we might risk creating a symbol to represent an entity with total awareness, responsiveness, and creativity—God. Within this complexity of relationships we live and move and have our being.

There are no relationships which reside within us or outside us, only the multitudes which occupy the same space at our center of awareness, swirling, dancing, and blending so as to create our identity for the next moment.

The curse of being made up of many relationships is that we can be overwhelmed, immobilized, shattered, or ripped apart by too many with too much intensity at any given time. At the other extreme we may be left languishing in boredom and tedium by the lack of stimulation with too few and too routine. The blessing is that we can experience the joy, rapture, and euphoria of heightened intense moments.

Certain relationships take priority during given stages of our life:

our relationship with our large motor muscles when learning to walk, our newly emerged sexual feelings at puberty, our lover when we have fallen in love, and our vocational options when we must decide upon our career. That given relationship seems to be all-consuming, pushing all other relationships to the sidelines until others arise at later stages.

Relationships ebb and flow, take center stage and later exit stage left. A call from juvenile detention that his son was being held there drastically altered Toby's kaleidoscope of relationships. Those relationships which were in the foreground just before the call are shifted rapidly to the background. The appointment books and the to-do lists for that day are summarily erased.

Toby would be overwhelmed were he to return home from juvenile detention with his son to an empty house and a note from his spouse saying that she had left him. Earlier that day he had heard more rumors that the downsizing was imminent at his corporation, seen an unfavorable stock market report, and heard on his car radio that a major crisis in the Middle East had resulted in a number of reserve units being placed on alert.

Our efforts to creatively manage these relationships take a number of forms.

Toby may attempt to blank out his worry about his Army reserve unit being called up, yet there will be daily reminders from the media. Likewise, he may throw

himself totally into his work to block out the pain of his relationships with his spouse and son. The nagging stomach pain might be relegated to the realm of his imagination—it's all in my head—rather than regarded as an important symptom that is real and a warning that needs to be heeded.

While Toby's attempts to deal with his matrix of relationships may be effective at some times, they are ultimately limited in value, just as are other methods we may choose: "I won't think about it." "I just don't read the newspaper anymore." "I guess it's just my fate to be torn up all the time." "I simply do not have what it takes to make big decisions." "I say live and let live. I'll take care of me, let them take care of themselves." "Guess I'm a hypochondriac." "Let those with better minds than mine figure that out." "I must be doing something wrong."

We want to simplify. Our own needs for safety and comfort call us to narrow, blunt, muffle, deflect, reduce, discount, avoid, ignore, suppress, or redefine the awesome complexity and intensity of the matrix of relationships in which we live. Yet there must be a better way, a way which is enduring and effective.

Our experience in the counseling office has provided us with the opportunity to discover some positive ways to live within this awesome complexity. We offer the following:

- acknowledge that we all live

within the swirling complexity of relationships;

- hold in tension the natural diversity and contrasts among our relationships;
- remain open to unexpected happenings;
- accept change as a given reality;
- expect the ebb and flow of the urgent and consuming;
- search continually for balance and harmony among the multitude of relationships;
- listen to the whispering of the divine in the midst of all other relationships.

We suggest that this is the everyday creativity of every person. It may be so routine and familiar that we are reluctant to call it by such a sophisticated name, but developing an ever-shifting balance and harmony within this great complexity is to engage in creative transformation.

In times of engulfing anxiety, fear, or sorrow, the most balance possible may be to feel *out of balance* and to be hopeful for a new day. Surely, balance and harmony are relative.

Most importantly, we are empowered in our effort when we affirm that there is One who is continually present in the midst of our relationships offering us surprising possibilities of beauty and harmony. In this new year, may we add ways of being creative to our list of resolutions!

Creation as Liturgy: The Ceremonial Dimension of the Cosmos

Paul S. Nancarrow

Many faith communities today are exploring the relation between creation and liturgy. For many churches, the operative question is, “How can we make our liturgical expressions more respectful of the created world around us? How can we be more *inclusive* of the whole cosmos in our human liturgical action?” It is a valid and a pressing question, and it has given rise to some exciting developments in ritual and worship. From prayer books to pamphlets to websites, more and more intentionally creation-centered liturgies are becoming available for use in a variety of faith communities.

But for the ancient church, the question of the relation between cosmos and liturgy could be rather different. In a sense, the ancient church approached this relation from the other direction: it was taken as a matter of faith that the creation itself possessed a liturgical character, so the question was less how to make human liturgy more cosmic, but how to make the human presence in the cosmos more like liturgy.

Consider, for example, Psalm 148. Psalm 148 is a wonderful hymn of praise to the Creator; but structurally, it is laid out as a series of calls to various orders of creatures to raise their own

“voices” in praise to the One from whom they come. “Praise YHWH from the heavens; praise God in the heights,” the psalm begins, “praise God all you angels of God’s; praise God, all God’s host.” The call to praise begins by summoning the heavens and the supernal creatures to raise their

The whole cosmic activity is a single ongoing liturgy, and the proper role of humans is to be participants in that liturgy.

voices; it proceeds next to astronomical phenomena: “Praise God, sun and moon; praise God, all you shining stars.” The call to praise then turns to the earth, to the mythical depths (“sea-monsters and all deeps”), atmosphere (“fire and hail, snow and fog”), wild nature (“mountains and all hills”; “wild things”), domesticated nature (“fruit trees”; “all cattle”), human society (“Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and

all rulers of the world”), and finally to the faithful people (“God has raised up strength for God’s people, and praise for all God’s loyal servants”). The hymn describes concentric circles of praise, not unlike the concentric circles of the Ptolemaic universe; but here each circle is not simply the orbit of a planet, here each circle is a rank of creatures; and all the ranks of creatures are called to offer their own unique praise to God in one universal cosmic harmony. In Psalm 148 the universe is presented with a liturgical shape, as the whole cosmos arranges itself in the form of a choir before God. At the center of the choir are the faithful people, who have a special role to reflect back to the whole creation its own innate liturgical character, and to summon creation to its full liturgical reality.

This vision of cosmic liturgy was carried over in the early Christian tradition as well. Louis Bouyer notes the patristic thinking that “the whole world is essentially liturgical . . . a celebration of uncreated glory through the whole time of creation.” He goes on: “Through sacramental participation in the Savior’s glorifying cross, [humankind] thus joins the faithful angels, themselves forever celebrating,

from the first moment of creation, the Ancient of Days.”¹ In this view, the whole cosmic activity is a single ongoing liturgy, and the proper role of humans is to be participants in that liturgy.

This view of the cosmos as liturgy, and of the human place in the cosmos having a liturgical character, has some concrete and practical consequences for human activity in the created world.

Think about how St Paul describes worship in his correspondence with the faith community in Corinth: “When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn . . . Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said” (1 Cor 14:26ff). This is a vision of the many coming together, joining their differences in a communing action, and becoming one in the Spirit of God.

Essentially the same thing happens in our liturgies today, too. One person reads a lesson, another person leads the intercessions, a few persons sing a choral piece, another person helps administer communion, another person presides and guides the whole assembly through their prayers. All the different roles and gifts are woven together for the good of all. In the liturgy we experience a way of being together that is *different* from the way human society usually works:

in the liturgy we celebrate a God-graced unity-in-diversity that helps us be individuals *and* a community in a way that is deeper and broader and more far-reaching than our usual day-to-day way of being. Worshiping together shapes us to value togetherness and cooperation and mutual well-being as ideals in all our activities.

*Whenever human
action in the
world assists the
world itself to
flourish, then we
are acting as
priests in the
sacrament of the
cosmos.*

And if we think of the cosmos as having a liturgical shape, then our worship-taught values of togetherness and cooperation and mutual well-being carry over into our action in the natural world as well. Human beings bring their gifts to the cosmic communion—but so do pine trees, and supernovas, and sperm whales, and bacteria, and hummingbirds. Human beings, however, have a special gift: the gift of recognizing, knowing,

contemplating, appreciating the gifts the other creatures bring. We can name and raise up and celebrate the other creatures, not just for what they mean for us, but for what they are in themselves, for their own unique reflection of God’s creating love. In that sense, human beings take a place at the center of the choir of praise, human beings act as priests in the liturgy of creation, human beings are called to be celebrants who assist the creatures in bringing forth their gifts and becoming thanks and praise to God. Whenever human action in the world assists the world itself to flourish, then we are acting as priests in the sacrament of the cosmos.

So for us today, not only for the ancient church, the vision of the creation itself as one vast liturgy holds keys to rethinking our human place in the cosmos and our human action in nature. For us, too, the question may not be so much “How can we make our liturgies more inclusive of creation?” as it is, “How can we make our action in creation more inclusive of our liturgy?”

¹ Louis Bouyer, *Cosmos: The World and the Glory of God*, trans. by Pierre de Fontnouvelle (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s Publications, 1988) 200ff.

Listening to Your Life: Your Life as *Lectio Divina*

Bruce G. Epperly

God is the mirror which discloses to every creature its own greatness . . . Every event on its finer side introduces God into the world. Through it [God's] ideal vision is given a base in actual fact to which [God] provides the ideal consequent, as a factor saving the world from the self-destruction of evil. The power by which God sustains the world is the power of [the Divine] as an ideal. [God] adds [Godself] to the actual ground from which every creative act takes its rise. The world lives by its incarnation of God in itself.¹

The practice of *lectio divina*, or holy reading, is at the heart of traditional Christian spiritual formation. Grounded in Benedictine spirituality, *lectio divina* incarnates the words of scripture within the living word of human experience. Easily practiced by individuals or groups, traditional *lectio divina* involves the following steps:

- 1) listening deeply to a scripture passage, so that it truly “soaks” into the unconscious as well as conscious mind;
- 2) identifying the word or phrase that “speaks” to one’s life;
- 3) reflecting upon and repeating the phrase, or word, in order to ground it in experience;
- 4) awakening to the meaning of the scripture for one’s life and its impact on one’s actions;

5) gratitude for Divine guidance and revelation in one’s life.

Traditional *lectio divina* is restricted to meditation upon God’s revelation in the Holy Scriptures. While process thought affirms the inspiration of scripture as a dynamic narrative of the divine-human encounter which awakens us to God’s lively presence in our lives today, process thought equally affirms the universality of Divine revelation beyond the pages of scripture. The light of God shines in all things, including quotidian human experience. With a Christian mystic, process thought affirms that all things are words of God. The “poet of the world” enables us to become what Emerson described as “bards of the Holy Spirit,” creating our own unique verses in partnership with God.

Process spirituality opens the door to new models of spiritual formation. In particular, process spirituality creatively transforms traditional practices such as Benedictine *lectio divina* and Ignatian imaginative prayer.²

“The world lives by the incarnation of God in itself.” Each creature reveals and conceals the divine. Each moment is an epiphany, a manifestation of Divine wisdom, for those whose senses are awakened to the Holy in the

ordinary. Every moment arises from God and manifests the interplay of divine and creaturely creativity and artistry. Each life and experience can be the object of religious reflection and spiritual formation. Put simply, your life is the primary material for your spiritual reflection. Spiritual formation enables us to experience the holiness and adventure hidden in every day experience.³

Process theology invites us both to affirm and transform the traditional practice of *lectio divina*. With the traditional Benedictine spiritual guides, process theology affirms the importance of a personal encounter with scripture. This intimate encounter frees scripture from outworn and literal interpretations. In so doing, scripture truly becomes a living word and new light is shed on old passages. Yet, process thought transforms *lectio divina* by expanding it to include our own experience as revelatory of God.

A process version of *lectio divina* focuses on the incarnation of God in each person’s life. For example, at the end of the week or as the day concludes, one may choose to look back at a particular moment, insight, or encounter as embodying God’s wisdom in one’s life. In order to explore the presence of God in that moment, a person may

choose to take the following steps:

- 1) Imaginatively recall the moment, exploring its own unique gift. What happened? What was your response? Who (if any) were the other participants in the moment?
- 2) Journal the experience, letting your mind roam freely through the particular event.
- 3) Ask for Divine guidance in experiencing the holiness of the event.
- 4) What phrase, word, or image from the experience “speaks” to you?
- 5) Let the image soak in as you meditatively reflect and repeat it.
- 6) Where was God present in that experience? Where was God’s aim at beauty incarnate in that experience? Where is the Divine lure leading you at this time in your life?
- 7) Does reflection on that experience lead you to any particular action?
- 8) Conclude by thanking God for always being present in your life as the source of inspiration and partner in the creative adventure.

While this intimate form of *lectio divina* does not replace the traditional scripture-based approach, it opens our lives to deeper dimensions of God’s presence. As we spiritually reflect on our experience, we discover some important truths of both biblical and process-relational thought:

- 1) God is active in your life.
- 2) Your life is a holy adventure in companionship with the Holy Adventure.
- 3) Divine inspiration constantly guides you, even when you are unaware of it.
- 4) Divine inspiration and guidance come from every quarter. Each person and encounter speaks God’s word to you.
- 5) Your own process of self-creation moment by moment is an act of partnership with God.
- 6) The world is a revelation of God, in which “God’s grandeur” is revealed in all things.

*Process spirituality
provides a glimpse
into our own lives
as incarnations of
the Divine.*

In exploring new forms of process spirituality, process thinkers are invited to expand their own understanding of process theology and metaphysics. While highly rational in its quest to understand the universe, process thought is equally mystical in its recognition of God’s presence in all things, the importance of non-sensory experience and influence at a distance, and the ubiquity of

the Divine lure. Process spirituality provides a glimpse into our own lives as incarnations of the Divine and responds creatively to our culture’s quest for authentic, holistic, and socially responsible spiritual practices. Process *lectio divina* awakens us to the wonder of our own lives and the divine presence in our human and non-human companions.

¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 148-149.

² For a process-relational approach to Ignatian guided meditations, see Bruce Epperly *The Power of Affirmative Faith: A Spirituality of Personal Transformation* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2001), Bruce Epperly, *God’s Touch: Faith, Wholeness, and the Healing Miracles of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), and Bruce Epperly and Lewis Solomon, *Mending the World: Spiritual Hope for Ourselves and Our Planet* (Philadelphia: Innisfree, 2002).

³ Patricia Adams Farmer’s *Embracing a Beautiful God* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2002) explores the Divine beauty hidden in all moments of experience.

Bruce Epperly is Director of the Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health and Adjunct Professor in the areas of theology, spirituality, and pastoral care at Wesley Theological Seminary and Georgetown University School of Medicine. He may be reached at DrBruceEpperly@aol.com

Process Resources

A Homily on Hope

John B. Cobb, Jr.

Hope, along with faith and love, is a “theological virtue.” That means it is not based on changing circumstances. It does not calculate prospects for the future based on the current situation. It does not have a specific content. It is not undercut or negated by adverse outcomes, even very terrible ones. It is not a matter of optimism or of a particular temperament.

Hope does have assumptions. For many traditional Christians it is grounded in the belief that God is omnipotent. I will not rehearse the problems to which that foundation gives rise. For those who are influenced by process thought, the basis is different. We believe that in every situation God works to bring forth the best outcome that is possible. Without this belief in a process or power greater than ourselves working for the good, events might at times make us optimistic, but it would not be possible to have hope. With that belief, we cannot give up hope.

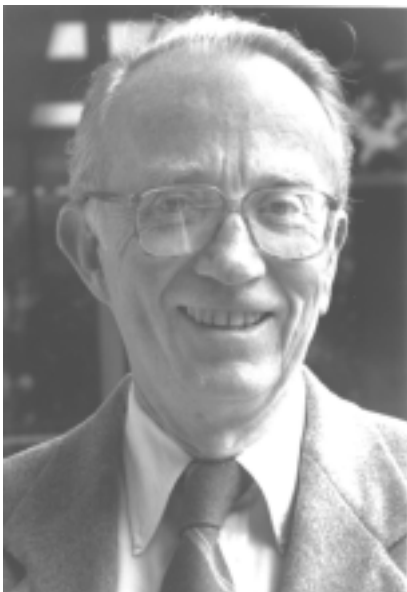
To have hope is to believe that we ourselves, and other people as well, can become what we now are

not—more loving, more sensitive, more open to learning from others. To have hope means to believe that institutions can become more just, that the world can become more peaceful and equitable, that ecological destruction may slow down and stop.

Each of the preceding statements is about possibility. To have hope does not mean to expect that we ourselves or others will grow in love, that institutions will function more justly, that the world will become more peaceful and equitable, or that ecological degradation will end.

Expectations of that sort are often, indeed usually, falsified. But hope does assume that, because of what God is doing and will continue doing, positive outcomes are possible, and that elements of such improvement are discoverable everywhere. It means, therefore, that it is worthwhile to give ourselves to the effort to increase love, justice, and peace among people and with our natural environment, that in doing so we are not alone.

It cannot be pointed out too frequently that the results of



complacency and despair are much the same. Both are theological vices. Hope is the alternative. We cannot be complacent about what is. We must not despair. Hope keeps us going.

Many of us find that expectations that once supported us in our efforts are being invalidated. The old-line churches are preoccupied with internal conflicts and unable to address in any effective way the immediate threat of war and the long-term threat of an American policy of global imperialism. The American people appear to be too easily misled by the mass media controlled by a small number of corporations. Our vaunted democracy functions much more as a plutocracy than as expressing the independent views of thoughtful citizens. Even other nations, where the people know better, seem to be unable to mount effective resistance to our national policies.

Hope will lead us to oppose American unilateralism and war against Iraq even if we bully our allies in the Security Council into supporting us. As the Pope has said, war against Iraq remains “unjust” by Christian standards even if many governments support it. Hope will not end if that war is fought. It will lead to seeking what justice and order will be possible in the Near East in the wake of such a war. Whatever turmoil ensues, hope will not die. It will seek to continue to remove support from our nation’s imperial ambitions.

Hope is important also at the personal level. There are times for most of us that our personal future looks bleak. A marriage is falling apart. Children are sick or hooked on drugs or in trouble with the law. We lose a job. A friend on whom we had counted turns out to be indifferent. We do not see how we can meet the financial needs of our families. Our own health breaks down. Aging means permanently giving up activities that have meant much to us. The list is endless. Optimism is not possible. Hope survives.

I have spoken of hope’s role mainly in negative terms. But hope is primarily positive. Hope will express itself in visions of a different future. These visions will be both general and vague and also involve quite specific goals, public policies, and private plans. When some parts of these visions become impossible, as when traditional cultures and whole ecosystems are destroyed, or when aging permanently ends major possibilities, hope reformulates visions in terms of what is still possible. Hope does not cling to the impossible. It is not overthrown by any circumstances. Whatever happens, along with faith and love, it lives on.

It cannot be pointed out too frequently that the results of complacency and despair are much the same. Both are theological vices. Hope is the alternative.

Critic's Corner: Film

Charles Yancey

A Beautiful Mind

Universal; DreamWorks: 2001
Ron Howard, Director
Starring: Russell Crowe, Jennifer Connelly, Ed Harris

A review of the film *A Beautiful Mind* in light of faith and process could go in many directions. Today I am moved towards a focus on questioning, one that I see as being central to process theology.

A Beautiful Mind and a theology of process are both about asking questions. They are a refutation of permanent answers. Both seem to *not* be about struggling to hold together a static worldview, one whose small set of questions was answered long ago. Local worldviews have always been vulnerable to the internal stresses that form their own history. These stresses first form cracks in the fortress walls of tradition. Then they become absurd by the global combination of a multitude of uncertainties within and among the separate fortresses across a global landscape.

John Nash, mathematician and paranoid schizophrenic, social misfit, seeks public identity in thought rather than feeling. To his *intellectual* questions about the world around him his advisor says: "Do you realize this flies in the face of 150 years of

economic history?" Nash counters: "Adam Smith was wrong." So much for stability. So much for doctrine. To Nash's *emotional* questions about the world around him, his *thought* creates delusional characters and situations that offer him life.

A Beautiful Mind and process are both about falling in love, which also does not resolve questions. Soon to be wife of John Nash, Alicia, asks: "How big is the universe?" John: "Infinite." Alicia: "How do you know?" John: "All the data indicates it." Alicia: "How do you know for sure?" John: "I don't, I just believe it." Alicia: "It's the same as love, I guess." Alicia and John marry, have a son, but don't settle into the myth of suburban life. They encounter the unknown unknowns. Eventually there is therapy.

Psychiatrist Dr. Rosen: "Imagine if you had suddenly learned that the people and the places, the moments most important to you were not gone, not dead, but worse, had never been. What kind of hell would that be?" Sounds like a theological question. Or one about ordinary life?

It's a story about faith in the face of distressing uncertainty that acts on and against thought and emotion. It's not doctrine set

apart from real life. Process theology never admits to resolving all the questions. Indeed, it seeks questions and the boundaries of context on both the questions and our perishable responses. Much of global religious history has been about getting the children to accept the questions and answers that have "stood the test of time." Process says "No," not because it is against resolution, but because God's creation is always on the move. God keeps changing everything, keeps stirring up the stew. Any process, chemical, mechanical, thermal, organic, cognitive, emotional, romantic, has questions. Thereby process is uncertain. *A Beautiful Mind*, as only a particular expression of process theology, declares this emphatically.

To the few words about the film itself, I will offer some thoughts about the story inside the story. The DVD recording format offers additional features, in this case separate commentaries by director and screenwriter. Of course that multiplies by three the time invested in witnessing a film, but the reward is a revelation of the extraordinary devotion of artists and craftspeople. There are also aspects presented that are not at

all evident in a single viewing. Truly there is a complex of relationships to bring a story to film.

Director Ron Howard tells of research he did prior to filming. Like many of us, Howard thought of mathematics as a tool for computing percentages and the like. A research mathematician taught Howard about a realm of theory in which the quest is not for answers, but for shapes and relationships among its mathematical notation. In a way mathematical inquiry is a search for questions.

A Beautiful Mind was adapted from the biography by Sylvia Nasar. Critics sometimes will gauge success by how closely a film follows the book. Such a method defines a correct answer. But I'm not sure a replica offers new relationships. Given the constraints of the film medium, and the creative impulse of the artists, new vistas arise from freedom. Screenwriter Akiva Goldsman marveled at how script would give way to dialogue, which might give way to improvisation. The scene where Alicia teaches John that what is real is the caress of her hand on his face was rewritten some seventy-five times. Yet according to Goldsman, the scene found its identity during rehearsal, and with a minimum of spoken words. In the hearts and hands of thoughtful artists the process is all seamless. Inspired by a biography, the artists built a new Alicia and John Nash across a span of fifty years. This does not happen without great affection for both the lives from which they draw and for the relationships which they might inspire.

Perhaps the Holy Bible that is the primary source for a theology of faith and process is not an answer book, but a book to inspire questions. Not rhetorical, not speculative questions, but questions that are framed within this context of continuing creation, and directed towards infusing a living creation with ever greater spirit. The questions encourage a convergence of our invented categories of flesh and spirit. Let us be thankful for our own stories and for those who in loving diligence are moved to weave them together as a testimony for the relationships that they portray.

Whitehead International Film Festival

Festival highlights include an opening night dinner with James Wall as featured speaker, and a celebration of the films of John Sayles. Each of the films in the 2nd Annual Whitehead Film Festival was selected for its artistic excellence and for its promotion of the common good. Each film celebrates human dignity, probes human problems, and offers hope for creative transformation.

Wednesday, January 29

Elling (Norway)

Thursday, January 30

Nanook of the North, classic film (USA)

Monsoon Wedding (India)

The Fast Runner (Canada)

Friday, January 31: A celebration of John Sayles

The Secret of Roan Innish

Lone Star

Men with Guns

Saturday, February 1

Spirited Away (Japan)

All films are shown at Claremont School of Theology, Mudd Theatre. For more information, call 909.621.5330, or go to:

<http://processandfaith.org>

Critic's Corner: Books

Embracing a Beautiful God, by Patrica Adams Farmer (Chalice Press, 2002; 120 pp.; paper; \$16.99). *Creative Transformation* is pleased to reprint Marjorie Suchocki's Foreward, by permission of Chalice Press. The book is scheduled for publication in March 2003.

This is one of those rare books that IS what it is ABOUT: Beauty. In poetic images, Patricia Farmer invites us into her own reveries about God and the world. Her theme is a theology of beauty, of finding inspiration—and consternation!—in the small ordinary things of daily life.

While this inspiring book draws us into the simple beauties of a sandy beach, of a lovely path, of deeply satisfying personal relationships, it neither hides ugliness nor paints for us a utopian world. Rather, beauty for Patricia Farmer is holding the contrasting tensions of the good, bad, and indifferent together in such a way that transformation can occur. We are taken not only into the beauty of a meditative moment, but also into the ugliness of a consumer society gone amok, of corporate greed, of terrible conflict. What are we, as ordinary individuals, to do with such facts about our world? Farmer suggests that we can live into the tension created by the contrast between these ugly facts and the more wondrous side of existence. This tension itself can inspire us to act for transformation of the negative into more positive ways of communal being. The beauty

found in meditating upon the lovely provides a stark contrast to the negative elements of greed and guns. This contrast pushes us toward the work of creating beauty in our social lives. And while our actions may seem like small deeds in our personal and communal living, the interdependence of our world is such that every action invites a reaction. We can be agents toward beauty; our efforts matter.

Interdependence is the major supposition of Farmer's work. She is a process theologian who thinks and lives from the basic reality that all things and people and events are interconnected. God's work in this interrelatedness is always toward the production of beauty, taking up what is and nurturing it toward what it yet might be. Our own openness to beauty is at the same time an openness to God, answering the divine invitation to participate more fully in God's creative work.

Beauty, then, is not just a happenstance of the universe, not some totally subjective construal dependent wholly upon human imagination. Is a sunset beautiful whether we see it or not? In Farmer's world, yes. Is this strange and



awesome confluence of green and blue that makes up our planet just incidentally beautiful? Or was it only beautiful when we saw it so from space photographs? In Farmer's world, this planet is intentionally beautiful. Beauty is not some side benefit invented by human perception. Rather, beauty is at the heart of all things, beauty is at the heart of God, and the beauty that we see—and even create—is like the trailing wake from God's hand across the ocean of the universe. This is why, in attending to beauty, we become open to the mystery of God. In attending to beauty, we open ourselves to participation in God's own transformation of things to modes of beauty not yet realized, but hovering still on the edges of becoming.

So take a "Beauty Break," as Patricia Farmer puts it, and wander into these words that wait for you. You will go beneath the surface of things, and come up with new wisdom in your own daily participation in beauty.

A Baptism Blessing

Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki

Rebecca's Blessing

*You are born in life, and for life;
Be blessed with the wonder of life;
Grow into a woman with zest and gladness for the adventure of life,
And you will be a blessing.*

*You are born in love, and for love;
Be blessed by the loving care that surrounds you;
Grow into a woman whose love flows deeply, freely,
And you will be a blessing.*

*You are born in peace, and for peace;
Be blessed with the joy of peace;
Grow into a woman whose zeal for peace contributes to
the flourishing of earth
toward life, toward love, toward peace,
And you will indeed be a blessing.*

Amen

Sturm, continued from page 13

embraces any violation of human rights. It embraces any degradation of the delicate balance of living forces that constitutes the ecological system. Violence, so comprehended, is harmful to the ongoing adventure of life and, as such, is wrong, even when invoked as an allegedly legitimate means of defense or social control.

If, as sometimes asserted, violence is ever a genuine necessity for the flourishing of the community of life, it must be considered as nothing more than a tragic necessity. Even if, under some circumstances, violence may seem to be effective, that should never be a cause for jubilation. Violence, even when deemed necessary, still results in loss both for the immediate victim and for the whole community. Violence in all its shapes and under all conditions is cause for grief.

III. Over against the pervasive culture of violence that seems to have us in its grip despite its inherently destructive bent, the tradition of nonviolence presents us with a powerful and persuasive alternative—an alternative that, I propose, constitutes both a moral necessity and a historical possibility. Throughout the twentieth century—the most violent century in human history—we have convincing evidence that the tradition of nonviolence constitutes an effective resource for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and

significant political transformation. Cases in point include not only movements directed by Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., but innumerable other instances where strategies of nonviolence have proven successful to defuse conflicts that otherwise would have resulted in massive death and to advance the cause of human dignity and peace.

We should take note, as well, of significant efforts drawing on peoples throughout the world to promote nonviolence as a morally superior, if not morally obligatory, way to approach our interactions with each other, personally and collectively. Over the past few years, the General Assembly of the United Nations, following the leadership of UNESCO, adopted a Declaration and Program of Action promoting the formation of a “Culture of Peace” and launched an International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World in 2001.

The Earth Charter movement, with contributions and endorsements from diverse cultural traditions through its extensive work over the past five years, insisted, as the culminating principle in its standard for a sustainable way of life, on the need to “promote a culture of . . . nonviolence and peace.”

All of these developments assume that violence and nonviolence are grounded on antithetical understandings of life and its conflicts. The use of violence assumes an oppositional

thesis: in the scramble for the goods of life either I win and you lose, or you win and I lose. The use of nonviolence, in contrast, assumes a relational thesis: our lives are so entangled and interdependent, we need to collaborate with each other, however deep-seated our differences, to develop ways to live together. If we resort to violence, we both lose. If we develop nonviolent means of resolving conflicts and getting on in life, we both win. Even in those painful and complicated cases where only one party initially eschews violence by adhering to nonviolence, we both win at least over the long haul as the realization deepens that the worth of life is derived from our togetherness within the community of life. That’s why, from a relational perspective, nonviolence is a moral necessity. That’s why we confront the need to engage deliberately and aggressively in a massive effort throughout all our social practices to dismantle the culture of violence that has us in thrall and to create a culture of nonviolence. Only in that way can we do justice to the community of life that is our inheritance and our destiny and demonstrate our faith in the Creative Source of all our being.

P&F Connections

Wenatchee, Washington

Members of Process and Faith, with evergreens, pruners, wire, and bows, helped children make Christmas wreaths and swags at our church's annual Advent Event on December 4. On December 8 a division of P&F, The Committee for Peace with Justice in the Middle East, jointly sponsored a candlelight peace pilgrimage, the second peace event in which we have participated in Wenatchee. On December 22, we will hold our Twenty-Ninth Annual Old-Fashioned Family Carolling Party where persons give loved ones, especially those home-bound, a gift of music— forty to fifty voices singing at their front door. In January at our traditional Bleak Mid-Winter Potluck we will decide by vote which book we will study next in our Sunday class. We will open the new year with a six-week class titled, Meet John Cobb, where we will study John's biography, teachers, students, and contributions to theology, culminating in a birthday party on February 9 where persons will be invited to become charter members of Process and Faith: Wenatchee. Although we have existed for many years, this will inaugurate our formal status as a Connection. For more information, contact Adrienne and Bob Brizee at brizeeab@aol.com

Belgium-France

Freddy Moreau, our correspondent in Belgium-France has been busy with a number of translations. He has completed his translation of *God & the World* and several articles from the summer issue of *Creative Transformation*. All this and more is on his website, which all readers are encouraged to visit. You can go to it directly at the address below, or follow the link from the Process & Faith website. Tell your French-speaking friends. Brush up on your own language skills! Contact Freddy directly at freddy.moreau@skynet.be or visit his website at: <http://www.protestantismeliberal.be/>

Minneapolis-St. Paul

The Twin Cities Connection is growing. After Marjorie Suchocki's Rochester lecture in October, "Divinity and Diversity: Does God know about other religions?" a group of people interested in exploring process theology further developed in that city a short distance away. Several of their members came to our November meeting. They have volunteered to host our January 2003 potluck-and-conversation meeting at Christ United Methodist Church in Rochester. The date and agenda are to be announced, and the time will be 7:00 p.m. We are also planning to hold our quarterly business meeting on Tuesday, February 25, 2003 at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul. The meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. Marjorie Suchocki will offer public lectures at United Seminary in St. Paul on Monday evening, February 24 and Tuesday morning, February 25. For further information about all of these events, contact Kirsten Mebust at kirsten.mebust@cgu.edu.

Atlanta

We will be starting the Whitehead reading group in January. Already there has been some good interest from current students and a couple of faculty members at area colleges and universities. The group is designed for people with some familiarity with process thought who want to know what it is that Whitehead actually said. It is a reading group, though and not a class. Think coffee shop, comfy chairs and Whitehead two evenings a month. If interested, contact Monica A. Coleman at revmonica@worldnet.att.net or 404-235-6807

Florida Alert!

JoAnne and Ed Riedesel are eager to start a P&F Connection in Florday. They live in Sebastian, near Vero Beach. Contact them at ejhbr@ixpres.com.

It's here!

Marjorie Suchocki's introductory pamphlet, "What Is Process Theology?" — a simple, readable explanation of process theology, perfect for church study groups. Available from Process & Faith for \$5/\$3 members (plus tax and shipping). Call 909.447.2559 or write faith@ctr4process.org.

Process & Faith

A Program of the Center for Process Studies
1325 North College Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711-3199

Nonprofit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Claremont, CA
Permit #176

Forwarding Service Requested

