Mystery and Awe of God’s Creation

Teacher Background

Psalms of Thanks and Praise for Creation

A common image of God in the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament is God as Creator. Psalms are prayers, poems and hymns intended to focus the worshipper’s thoughts on praise and adoration of God. In many Psalms creation is recorded as good and wondrous.

The Church holds in high regard the praying of the psalms as a vital form of its public prayer. The psalms can be prayed and sung during significant liturgies and/or personally in more informal pray modes. The ‘Prayer of the Church’ is the praying of a collection of psalms namely; the Divine Office. The Divine Office and its various forms are prayed daily by priest and religious. These psalms are said or sung in chorus privately or in common. Lay people are also encouraged to pray and/or sing the Divine Office in different forms and contexts. (See Vatican II’s Constitution of the sacred Liturgy, Chapter 4, Nos. 83-101).

There are 150 psalms and parts of this book were used as a hymnal in the worship services of ancient Israel. Frequently psalms are considered to be human responses to a majestic and glorious God. Human responses to those psalms are of wonder, awe and fear e.g. “Sing to God you kingdoms of the earth: (68:32). However, other psalms portray God as a loving Lord who is relational and involved in our lives and human response to those psalms is of comfort and security: “I will fear no evil; for You are with me (23:4). Other psalms express a human response of despair and anguish at a God who seems to have abandoned the believer. Many of these psalms include a human response that seeks God’s power to defeat enemies and protection from the lies of accusers. Some of the language in these Psalms portrays God with images of violence and retribution. This style of writing is often referred to as ‘imprecatory’ text in that it calls down evil on one’s opponents. The writers of these psalms have portrayed the limited nature of human beings and their common feelings of despair and wrath with the difficulties of life. Many find such violent images of God difficult to accept. Believers and worshippers from a contemporary context need to view such images as a reflection of the thinking and context of that time. Generally speaking the psalms of despair and lament never leave the reader totally engulfed with feelings of despair. There are always signs of hope and God’s love within these psalms.

God’s Presence

Believers acknowledge that God is active in the world through God’s transcendent and immanent nature. The activity of God as a transcendent agent is all-pervasive, as Paul observes: “all things are from him and through him and unto him” (Rom 11:36). God is the creative source of all things, the sustaining ground of all things and the final end of all things. God is immanent in that God’s presence is inherently within all of creation including humankind. Believers acknowledge that God is continually present among God’s people and within each individual believer. This divine activity goes beyond and within the identity of all things and is at their very essence or root. This divine activity underpins all creation.

God’s activity in the world refers to God’s sharing or communicating the divine goodness and reality. The creative activity of God is the sharing the divine goodness with human beings. God’s activity in the world is often spoken of in terms of wisdom, love and power. Wisdom is God’s perception of all possibilities of communicating reality to human beings. Love refers to the God’s divine goodness being given and shared and expressed through creative actions. Finally, divine power is the union of wisdom and love that empowers God to choose what is revealed to God’s finite beings. God’s presence or immanence allows human beings to exist and actively share within themselves and with
one another the goodness or reality that they receive from God. This divine presence of wisdom love and power provides believers with the capacity to feel and know God’s presence within and beyond all of creation, to call on God’s love, wisdom and power and to creatively share their giftedness and lives with others.

**Meditation**

Prayer is an effective symbolic activity that provides worshippers with a means of expressing what they believe about God and their relationship to God. Meditative prayer is a reflective, contemplative, symbolic activity that achieves the same purpose as conventional prayer. Such symbolic action provides worshipers with reflective opportunities to feel God’s presence in an intimate way.