

## THE CANTICLE OF re:CREATION with ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS



“It is impossible that God fail to play his part, by communicating *himself*, at least in a hidden way. It is more impossible for the sun not to shine in a tranquil, open place. The sun is up early and shining on your house, ready to shine in if you open the curtains. So God, who never sleeps nor slumbers as he keeps watch over Israel, will enter the empty soul and fill her with divine blessings. God is like the sun, shining over souls, ready to communicate himself to them...”

(Reflections on “Living Flame” 3.46-47 by Iain Matthew, *Impact of God*, 75)



“Glancing at a clear night sky, thousands of starlets are faintly glimmering. If we fix our gaze on one, it may seem to disappear – as the part of the eye used to focus functions only in light. A faint glimmer at night shows up in a general glance, but disappears when we fix on it. Many good things are like that: they come when we are looking for something else. Peace comes, if we are looking not to feel peaceful, but to work for justice. Community comes, if what we want is, not to feel togetherness, but to serve. Consolation comes, if we seek not to be consoled, but to be faithful. The risen one comes when we allow ourselves to die.

‘In the midst of this darkness and pain where love is present, the soul feels a certain companionship...’

(From “Dark Night” Book 2, ch 11.7 in Iain Matthew, *The Impact of God*, 64).



“Except for the conversations his captors feigned at the door of his dungeon to break his morale, John heard few sounds in prison. One sound he could hear was the river Tajo which circled tongue-shaped round Toledo. The city wall in which John was closeted dropped down to this river below: water flowing, sometimes torrential, sometimes inaudible. It came to symbolise for him the flowing creativity of God – always torrential, but known in the inaudibility of faith. A fountain that flows by night. This formed the refrain in another of his prison poems.

“I know so well the fountain, rushing and flowing though it be night.”

The stanzas tell of an ocean-sized waterfall, which is Father surrendering to Son, Son self-emptying to Father, Spirit-water spilling out to create a universe; the cosmos comes to sip it, though all – heaven, people, hell – are already drenched in it. John knows it, believes it; and he sees it welcomes, cupped and offered to him in the Bread of Life:

“That everlasting fountain comes concealed in this living bread, to give us life though it be night.”

(From “Song of the Soul that Rejoices in Knowing God through Faith” in Iain Matthew, *The Impact of God*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995, p. 72)



1. O living flame of love  
That tenderly wounds my soul  
In its deepest center! Since  
Now you are not oppressive,  
Now consummate! if it be your will:  
Tear through the veil of this sweet encounter!

2. O sweet cautery, O delightful wound!  
O gentle hand! O delicate touch  
That tastes of eternal life, And pays every debt!  
In killing you changed death to life.

3. O lamps of fire! in whose splendors  
The deep caverns of feeling, Once obscure and blind,  
Now give forth, so rarely, so exquisitely,  
Both warmth and light to their Beloved.

4. How gently and lovingly You wake in my heart,  
Where in secret you dwell alone;  
And in your sweet breathing, Filled with good and glory,  
How tenderly You swell my heart with love.

(“Living Flame of Love” from Kieran Kavanaugh, *The Complete Works of John of the Cross*, Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1991, pp. 52-53.)

For feedback or resources on the *Canticle of re:Creation* and the Franciscan Lectio of Creation contact [larry.jay@mac.com](mailto:larry.jay@mac.com).