

## **REFLECTIONS BY SISTER LINDA NEIL, CSJ**

*Given at the CSJ Associate Commitment Liturgy, June 12, 2011*

Alleluia! The Spirit of the Lord fills the whole world; indeed, God's Holy Spirit fills the entire Cosmos!

Pentecost is such an awesome feast. It is the wedding of the creative energies of God with the universe, with all that is, with all that lives and breathes!

The first reading proclaims this awesome power of creativity in the images of wind and fire. Indeed, the entire Cosmos emerged from the original fireball. This fire finds its origin in the very heart of Divine mystery. God breathed forth an elegant universe that continues to evolve in overwhelming wonders.

This *ruah*, this spirit, this divine breath, dances through the cosmos and calls us to breathe in and out the sacred mystery. In so many ways we have experiences of this sacred wind, this cosmic breath. Sometimes, it is frightful.

I have stood on a mountain top, bracing myself against the wind, leaning into it with all my might, so that I wouldn't be blown into the valley below. My own insignificance whipped around me and forced me to kneel in awe at the force of nature. Equally as moving is the quiet breath of a loved one going to God or a spring breeze carrying the first bird song. This breath and fire of God's spirit fills us with the awareness of the power of being and the awesome wonder of living our lives with the passion and zeal of Jesus.

The universe is filled with power, power that speaks of the Mystery of God, the power of imagination, of love and transformation. The universe is created in the likeness of God. Everything is alive with God's spirit and reflects God's goodness.

St. Paul declares that there is a great diversity of spiritual gifts, all pouring forth from the wondrous imagination of the Spirit. Each individual shows forth the spirit in some way. I think we can extend this beyond the human and deepen our realization that all of life manifests the Spirit – everything from the tiniest neutrino to the most massive star.

The Indwelling Presence of the Spirit throbs in every atom. Our special gift in being human in this universe is that we are conscious of this astonishing diversity and mindful that it is a sacred trust. Our call, our responsibility is to celebrate this diversity, to live in awareness of it, and yes, even to give our lives to preserve it.

The cosmos is created in the likeness of God. This likeness breathes forth in the powers that surround us in this stunning universe. This power manifests itself as the power of emergence, of becoming. The Spirit fills us with the desire to change, to reach for the more.

It is the power of allurements, the power of attraction, of love. Jesus shows forth these powers as good news today. The misuse of power, death and suffering, fear and hatred, locked doors or closed minds could not keep Jesus from those he loves. There he is in their midst, in our midst, radiant in the fullness of life. Jesus extends peace. Not judgment, not disapproval for our abandoning of him.

Jesus extends to his disciples, to us, the gifts of deepening relationship and communion. These gifts are alive throughout the cosmos. Jesus asks all of us to be the embodiment of this power- to bring this forgiveness and peace into all of creation.

In our reality today, we know that is a huge challenge. It demands great risk. We are here because of the risks that the universe has taken and this is not the time to grow timid! Here again we need to tap into the Spirit who has shown the benefits of risk- taking in the 13.7 billion years of evolution.

The New Story, which enfolds the Gospel story, calls us to risk, to challenge, to change, to dream a new way and to become a new consciousness on the planet- a consciousness that humbly relates to all others. Risk demands that we reach out to those who are marginalized in our world: ecosystems that are imperiled, our atmosphere, immigrants, refugees, endangered species, and members of all groups that are disdained.

We are sent into the world to be a reconciling presence. It takes a great deal of energy to transform anger, hatred and revenge into forgiveness and peace. It takes energy like Jesus' resurrected power, like the energy of the Spirit that courses through us.

That is the gift of our charism as Associates and Sisters of St. Joseph, our energy, that will effect transformation. As our Chapter vision statement proclaims: "this urgency to respond to the groaning of a disconnected world fills us." As Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates, as all disciples of Jesus, we know this urgency in our very bones. This is the urgency that has called our Associates together this weekend to reflect on the New Story and the challenge of the Spirit to live out the Story in our lives. It is this urgency which calls the Associates and Sisters to recommit to our charism of unity and reconciliation.

It is this urgency which moves all faithful disciples to be a transformative presence in our world. The energy of transformation impels us out into the world to participate in the Mystery of Transformation.

Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me, so do I send you!" The Lord of the Universe has sent out the Spirit and now overflowing with the Spirit we must go out and renew the face of our Earth! Let the Church say, "Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!"