



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE ALL GOD'S WORKS

By Father David C. Robinson, SJ

An Excerpt from Today's First Reading

Now will I recall God's works; what I have seen, I will describe. At God's word were his works brought into being; they do his will as he has ordained for them. As the rising sun is clear to all, so the glory of the LORD fills all his works.... He plumbs the depths and penetrates the heart; their innermost being he understands. The Most High possesses all knowledge, and sees from of old the things that are to come: He makes known the past and the future, and reveals the deepest secrets.... How beautiful are all his works! Even to the spark and fleeting vision! The universe lives and abides forever; to meet each need, each creature is preserved. All of them differ, one from another, yet none of them has he made in vain, for each in turn, as it comes, is good; can one ever see enough of their splendor?

SIRACH 42:15-25

Reflection

Nearly two centuries before the birth of Jesus, the Book of Sirach (The Wisdom of Ben Sira) was composed, subsequently accepted, and ultimately rejected as 'scripture' by Jewish and Protestant communities. Yet through the centuries, it has provided a source for humility, reverence, and human flourishing, and circulated in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Numerous Orthodox traditions, as well as Roman Catholic popes and Councils since the fourth century CE, embraced it as canonic scripture, and the Roman church recognized it as 'inspired.'

Sirach enjoys a unique role in multiple religious traditions, inviting a fidelity to God and neighbor, and a personal commitment to moral and spiritual integrity that is universal as well as 'canonic.' It is a clarion message across scriptural and communal teachings that appeals to mind, heart, and soul with a passionate yet lyrical voice. Its range is lauded on the US Bishops' website as it notes:

The book contains numerous well-crafted maxims, grouped by affinity, and dealing with a variety of subjects such as the individual, the family, and the community in their relations with one another and with God. It treats of friendship, education, poverty and wealth, laws, religious worship, and many other matters that reflect the religious and social customs of the time.

REFLECTION CONTINUES BELOW



Reflection Continued

For readers of any religious persuasion, the tender, urgent, and universal persuasiveness of this wisdom teaching impels the reader to turn heart and mind to recognize the mystery and promise of God for all who seek him with sincerity and humility. This is not a paternal or paternalistic collection of ethical maxims, but rather a mystical celebration of the endless creative initiative of God throughout the universe and throughout time:

At God's word were his works brought into being; they do his will as has been ordained for them. As the rising sun is clear to all, so the glory of the LORD fills all his works.

God plumbs the depths and penetrates the heart; their innermost being he understands. The Most High possesses all knowledge, and sees from of old the things that are to come.

How beautiful are all God's works! even to the spark and fleeting vision! The universe lives and abides forever; to meet each need, each creature is preserved. All of them differ, one from another, yet none of them has been made in vain, For each in turn, as it comes, is good; can one ever see enough of their splendor?

How often have we measured our emerging life by maxims and religious precepts? In our own spiritual and religious communities, we can only benefit from the sense of wonder and the abiding gratitude with which Sirach is imbued. The formation and transformation of our journey with God invites us to a mature vision of vocation and faith. This includes moral, ethical, and social wisdom, but just as importantly, a surrender to the miraculous joy, creativity, and love that are the abundant fruit of a life illumined by God's inspiring presence that creates and re-creates the world throughout the ages.

For Pondering

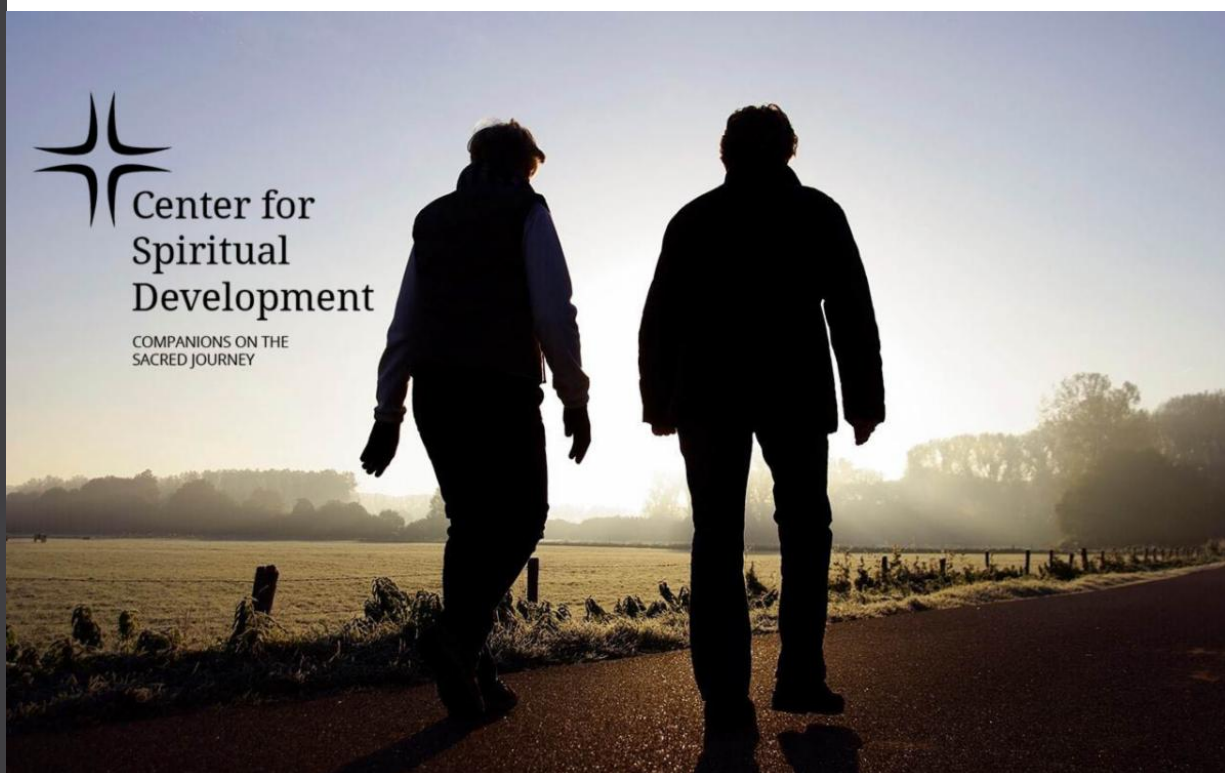
- What aspects of your connection to God invite you to innocent joy and wonder?
- Who has been a great inspiration in nurturing your sense of gratitude for

God's creative life within you?

- How do you share the mysteries of Spirit that call you to humility and surprise as you uncover more of the 'splendor' of creation?

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