

God's Presence in All Life



I have been reading a book by David Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution*, published in 2003. As an Associate Professor in Arts and teaching spirituality at a University, he has written about spirituality, especially that of young people, and also religion. He suggests that both subjects benefit by coming together. On page 81 he writes: "Many people seem content to allow youth spirituality and formal religion to go their separate ways... But my interest is to call them into relationship and conversation..."

I was attracted to what he wrote, but as I do not have much contact with youth, I have decided to write about spirituality and religion coming together in my life as an older person. I am starting with an experience I had recently involving both spirituality and formal religion.

The photo on the front of this leaflet is of a nest in the empty section of our fowl house, which has three sections. At present, the two other sections are occupied by four hens. A few days ago I saw a Carpet snake curled up in this nest with its head poking out. I think it was the same snake that recently scraped its old skin off on the rafters of our veranda. Realising that a snake, hens and their freshly laid eggs is not a good mixture, I decided we had better get someone to remove the snake to a suitable place, which was not near to us, and so would discourage the snake from returning.

We phoned someone who did this work and he agreed to come that morning. I had planned to go to the Wednesday Service at Church, as I usually did. I felt somewhat stressed when I realised that going to this Service today may not be possible for me. I needed to stay with the snake and prevent it from disappearing before the man arrived. I sat down on a perch, which was not very comfortable! The snake moved around a bit, going into the gap between the nest and a wall of the fowl house, and then back into the nest.

More than an hour passed. I became at peace. I had talked to the snake, and now began to hum hymn tunes. The snake put its head out and seemed to like the music! I felt God's presence very clearly, and relaxed into it. Eventually the man came, gently picked up the snake and put it into a bag. I farewelled the snake. It was now certainly too late to go to the Church Service, but what I had experienced felt like a sacred or spiritual time. I thanked God.

The Sunday after this event, as usual, I attended the morning Communion Service at Church. It is a time when I appreciate worshiping with others and receiving my Communion. This particular Sunday, when I had received the bread and wine and was returning to my pew, I could hear music being sensitively played by the pianist as she accompanied a voice singing a hymn written by Trisha Watts about God being with us and always loving us. I was moved and my eyes watered. For a few moments I seemed to see the Church filled with God's loving presence and everyone there surrounded by and in that presence. Afterwards, I went with others to have morning tea in our hall. Responding to what I had glimpsed, I could not help relating to all I met with respect, gentleness and care. Both of these events, involving the snake and fellow Christians, spoke to me of God's presence and love, deepening my love for God and others.

Another recent happening concerned the seeds of a green vegetable. Some time ago I bought some Bok choy plants, but they were not Bok choy. However, I liked their leaves in my salads and kept the seeds so I could continue to grow them. Last week I planted some seeds in a small container and watered them for a few days. As usual, the plants began to appear. I could not help recognising this also as God's presence in the life of the plants emerging from dry seeds.

As I have written in earlier leaflets, I find that looking around at leaves of trees gently moving, the beauty of flowers and hearing birds singing, all speak to me of God's loving presence.

I often think of how we also experience giving and receiving God's love in our relationships with one another. Even when dying on the cross and in great pain, Jesus saw the need to help and care for others and acted. When one of the criminals dying with him asked Jesus to remember him, Jesus replied in Luke 23:43, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." He promised to be with the criminal and not leave him alone. Also, in John 19:26-27, Jesus saw his grieving mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her. He said to his mother, "Woman here is your son", then to the disciple he said, "Here is your mother." They both went off and revealed God's love by supporting and caring for one another.

I believe that God's presence and love is everywhere, in a nest used by a snake, at a Church Service, in small plants emerging from seeds, and in conversations and actions with friends and strangers etc.. As Tacey says on p.164, "...God is everywhere and in all things, or to be more precise, all things are in God..." Indeed, I also believe that God's loving presence is in us and all creation, and that we are all in God.

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