



Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

Image by Christine Sponchia

THE IMAGE OF GOD'S GOODNESS

By Fr. David C. Robinson, SJ

An Excerpt from Today's First Reading

In Wisdom is a spirit intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, subtle, agile, clear, unstained, certain, not baneful, loving the good, keen, unhampered, beneficent, kindly, firm, secure, tranquil, all-powerful, all-seeing, and pervading all spirits, though they be intelligent, pure and very subtle. For Wisdom is mobile beyond all motion, and she penetrates and pervades all things by reason of her purity. For she is an aura of the might of God and a pure effusion of the glory of the Almighty; therefore, nought that is sullied enters into her. For she is the refulgence of eternal light, the spotless mirror of the power of God, the image of his goodness.

WISDOM 7:22-26

Reflection

The Book of Wisdom is a magnetic and mystifying narrative of the Wisdom

tradition in the history of Israel. Written in Greek, perhaps 50 years BCE, it contains elements reminiscent of the Alexandrian Greek schools of philosophy, while enfolded the Hebrew history of Wisdom in the story of Solomon and the guiding Wisdom of God in the generations of the Exodus, as well as the great creative Spirit of God in the entire universe. Reading this text in isolation, it appears to be an oddly universal fabric of history, philosophy, and cosmic creation that expands our imaginations to realize how difficult it is to capture the enormity and particularity of God in our world. We readily recognize the grace and goodness we associate with the presence of God in a “**spirit intelligent, holy, unique, manifold, clear, loving the good, beneficent, and kindly.**” This is the divine One at the heart of our religious lives, who is intimately linked to the unfolding of the minute particulars of our lives. Yet, Wisdom is, in addition, “**mobile beyond all motion, and she penetrates and pervades all things by reason of her purity. For she is an aura of the might of God and a pure effusion of the glory of the Almighty.**” The infinite power of the Creator of all that is abides in this ‘pure effusion’ of Wisdom throughout all time and space. Finally, in a philosophical/theological turn, she is recognized as the “**refulgence of eternal light, the spotless mirror of the power of God, the image of his goodness.**” Here we should be stunned into silence by the infinitude of our God as God—the one who forever abides beyond any name, or concept, or context that we can express or understand.

All of this may leave us feeling awash in a sea of emotion, imaginings, perplexity, awe, and simple fullness of soul. This single book, though not part of the widely accepted canonic biblical text (it is considered to be ‘deutero-canonical’), points to the incomprehensible reality of God. Our God is a God of tender presence, as near as our singular heartbeats, as particular as the smallest grain of sand on the seashore. At the same time, this God is the manifest center of the unfolding universe in all its enormity and beauty. Finally, this Wisdom of God is the ‘refulgence (radiance) of eternal light,’ the infinite illumination of the divine that we cannot name, define, or even imagine. It is this light that calls us forward, from the smallest moment to the farthest reaches of historic time, in all circumstances—our finite existence is our springboard in Wisdom to the very fullness of God.



By NASA's James Webb Space Telescope from Greenbelt, MD, USA - The Enduring Stellar Lifecycle in 30 Doradus (Composite: Infrared + X-ray), CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=132737543>

For Pondering

- What is your 'common sense' notion of Wisdom? How might this be applied to God?
 - Does your perception of God in your life embrace any (or all) of the images presented in this text (the intimately connected, the divine at the center of creation, or the ineffable mystery beyond human comprehension)?
 - If a friend asked you to describe the God at the center of your spiritual and religious life, what would you say?
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