

Globalization

Rita B. Maloney

Etymology is beginning to interest me more and more, and today I want to see how we proceeded from the word globalism «of, relating to or including the whole earth» to globalization which indicates how «westernism» dominates and manipulates traditional economies and cultures.

Over the years, I have come to realize that so many spiritual problems result not only from our misuse and abuse of power, but even more basically from our misunderstanding of it.

1. From Whom it comes
2. What Real Power is, and that
3. It is inherent in and, therefore, must be accessible to all. Once one of these aspects is out of balance, spiritual problems ensue.

Today I would like to open this reflection with a reading of the creation story from Genesis I. Try to see if you can take it in as though you are hearing it for the first time.

In this beautiful place, away from the noise of the city, be aware of the birds chirping, the ocean across the way, the vast open sky, grass, trees... and simply listen.

The first account of the creation

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God's spirit hovered over the water.

God said, «Let there be light,» and there was light. God saw that light was good, and God divided light from darkness. God called light «day,» and darkness he called «night.» Evening came and morning came: the first day.

God said, «Let there be a vault in the waters to divide the waters in two.» And so it was. God made the vault, and it divided the waters above the vault from the waters under the vault. God called the vault «heaven.» Evening came and morning came: the second day.

God said, «Let the waters under heaven come together into a single mass, and let dry land appear.» And so it was. God called the dry land «earth» and the mass of waters «seas,» and God saw it that was good.

God said, «Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants, and fruit trees bearing fruit with their seed inside, on the earth.» And so it was. The earth produced vegetation: plants bearing seed in their several kinds, and trees bearing fruit with their seed inside in their several kinds. God saw that it was good. Evening came and morning came: the third day.

God said, «Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to divide day from night, and let them indicate festivals, days and years. Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to shine on the earth.» And so it was. God made the two great lights: the greater light to govern the day, the smaller light to govern the night, and the stars. God set them in the vault of heaven to shine on the earth, to govern the day and the night to divide light from darkness. God saw that it was good. Evening came and morning came: the fourth day.

God said, «Let the waters teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth within the vault of heaven.» And so it was. God created great sea-serpents and every kind of living creature with which the waters teem, and every kind of winged creature. God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying «Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas; and let the birds multiply upon the earth.» Evening came and morning came: the fifth day.

God said, «Let the earth produce every kind of living creature: cattle, reptiles, and every kind of wild beast.» And so it was. God made every kind of wild beast, every kind of cattle, and every kind of land reptile. God saw that it was good.

God said, «Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild beasts and all the reptiles that crawl upon the earth.

God created man in the image of himself,
in the image of God he created him,
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, saying to them, «Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, and all living animals on the earth.» God said, «See, I give you all the seedbearing plants that are upon the whole earth, and all the trees with seed-bearing fruit; this shall be your food. To all wild beasts, all birds of heaven and all living reptiles on the earth I give all the foliage of plants for food.» And so it was. God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good. Evening came and morning came: the sixth day.

Thus heaven and earth were completed with all their array. On the second day God completed the work he had been doing. He rested on the seventh day and made it holy, because on that day he had rested after all his work of creating.

Such were the origins of heaven and earth when they were created.

With our human propensity to believe that we are God, to forget what real power is and to be convinced that power must be hoarded, we focused into one particular aspect of the creation story - «Be masters of.» Biblical scholars tell us that the real translation is not masters over, but caretakers of (stewards). A misunderstanding of true power enters and the stage is set for exploitation.

Some years ago, I was visiting a Native-American museum in the Niagara Falls area. The museum was very quiet, not many people were there and the Director was a full-blooded Native-American, a man perhaps in his sixties. I asked him to share with me something of his Native-American spirituality. First of all, he remembered when he was a child. Anytime one of the people of his tribe cut down a tree, he would first ask its permission. Then he would thank the tree for sacrificing its life to become a canoe for the tribe. The same process was followed by the fish of the sea. When the natives fished for salmon, they

thanked the fish, asked their permission and never took more than they needed.

These stories teach me the beauty of our own creation story. These natives were so aware of the sacredness of all nature. Are we? We grow enormous amounts of crops and then burn a good percentage of them so that we can control the prices. We cut down trees by the thousands with no concern for the environment, because it brings great profit to a few. Our chemical companies dump chemicals into our waters, knowing that they are carcinogenic to the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and the people that drink it, but it is the cheapest means of disposal. What has happened to our priorities? We are called a «super-power» not because of our wisdom or a deep sense of justice - a concern for the poor, the elderly, the weak, but because we have more nuclear weapons than any other nation on earth and a strong economy sometimes made on the backs of the poor. And, each of us has benefited from the prosperity we have so enjoyed. But, does it blind us sometimes? Do we become so used to and dependent upon our comforts that we disregard how we get them or how we use them once we do? Do we begin to hoard what we claim is ours, forgetting the True Source of Power, what real power is and that it should be accessible to all? This is the danger of being a «super-power».

Will we as a country, a culture, a Church that has been affected by and infected with this perspective be open to the stories of Native Americans, Tibetan Buddhists and so many others who understand our creation story better than we do? If we enter into dialogue with them, will we take them seriously even though they have little money and no weapons? Yet they have maintained a wisdom that we have lost! Will we allow their wisdom to touch our spirit, enriching our own understanding of the creation story, the meaning of which we seem to have lost along the way? Or, has our own tendency towards aggrandizement blinded us?

We must move from globalizaton - westernism dominating and «manipulating traditional economies and cultures» - to global consciousness - «receptiveness to and understanding of cultures other than one's own often as part of an appreciation of world socio-economic and ecological issues.» Not domination or manipulation, but receptiveness to and understanding of the other. We need to be challenged by the other if we are to preserve our soul as a nation, as a culture, as a Church, as a people. Can super-powers listen to those less powerful? Can we hold true dialogue taking the others in-put as seriously as our own?

How does all of this affect the Lasallian Mission worldwide? First of all, Lasallianization, unlike globalization does not only have a charism to bring but the charism we bring will be deepened and enriched by dialogue with the very people to whom we bring it. John Baptist de La Salle knew this. That is why he taught us that while we are to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to those whom we teach, those whom we teach will call us to conversion. This is an extremely radical teaching. It does not allow for

domination or manipulation. The ones to whom we bring the message are extremely important to our own salvation. Such balance! Such a sense of the dignity and value of all people, of all creation. There can be no exploitation! Lasallian mission puts us in contact with many other religions throughout the world.

Years ago (and I fear sometimes today) when we considered ourselves the one and only true Church, it led to certain consequences. We went out to change the other and, at times, we did it with violence. Once we believe that *we are the One* and others are not, *we have the truth* and others do not, we are rationalizing our path to control, abuse, and exploitation in the name of God. But we go out as Lasallians with a rich and profound tradition, bringing our faith and talents with us while being open to the faith and talents of others which will enrich us.

For the new millennium, right within the Lasallian family worldwide, we have the opportunity to bring to the Church and the world a new paradigm of respect, dialogue and cooperation with other religions, other countries and other cultures, to contrast with the devastating wars being fought around the world between Catholics and Protestants, Muslims and Jews, Christians and Muslims, and on and on. Brother Gerrard Rummery's story of the pilot who prays before he takes off, «Let us remember that we are in the presence of Allah,» proves that there is no tension, no clash. «A rose, called by any other name, is still a rose.»

We have built into our Lasallian family - young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, people of different religions, different colors, different cultures. How can we all be enriched by the inter-action? How can we have more inter-action? Can you imagine, in the new millennium having retreats or workshops in different parts of the world and then coming together via satellite for global interaction? How can we have teenagers in Bishop Loughlin communicating with teenagers in Viet Nam or Australia, or St. Mary's in Kenya, enriching one another, expanding their own consciousness? How can we who have more be touched by those who have less so that we may become more generous? Might we come to see that the way we live, the comforts we take for granted impact the lives of others?

These are the possibilities for the new millennium right within the Lasallian family. How can we tap into all of this diversity and use it in educating our youth? How can we instill gospel values in a culture that is so materialistic and self-serving? Can we foster respect for all religious persuasions? Can we accept the earth in all its beauty, created by God, cared for by us and enjoyed by all? Can we look at the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the rivers and the ocean, the stars in the sky and other humans as all part of one creation - there for the glory of God - never to be exploited?

There are so many questions as we enter the new millennium. The answers will determine whether we move forward to co-create with our God, or whether we destroy for individual greed. •