

## MYSTICISM WITH OPEN EYES

We enter here into the painful side of mysticism. Genuine mystics are moved by what they see, whether it be painful or pleasant. To contemplate is to take 'a long, loving look at the real' whether the real is beautiful or disfigured. The mystic tries to find God not only in what is radiant and lovely, but in the distortion of all which God made good. God was in disguise in the passion of Jesus and is likewise in the contemporary passion of Sister Earth.

To catch this dimension theologian J B Metz coined the striking phrase, '*mysticism with open eyes*'. An enlisted German teenager during World War II, he was reacting to the fact that the eyes of many good Christians were closed to the reality of the Jewish Holocaust. God, he believed, was there—only not in attractive form but in agony, but they were not present to this aspect of the divine. He lamented the absence of prophetic voices who would scream in protest at the genocide that was grinding systematically on. How, he wondered, might wooden doctrines and practices be transformed so that believers could pour out mercy on a suffering world and bind up the wounds of a savage passage of history?

His generation has passed, but now we have another holocaust around us.

*The pope says: 'Our Sister (Earth) now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her' (2).*

We cannot stand idly by while nature suffers. We must shift from a culture of indifference to engagement. Mysticism with open eyes begets deep feeling for suffering of whatever kind. An integral ecology is needed, made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. Such gestures are demanding, but they also possess a hidden joy they bring our lives back into harmony with the gracious dynamics of nature, where God is present. I keep on my desk a small snail-shell as a reminder of all the species that took millions of years to make but have disappeared from earth. Perhaps Noah should be made the patron saint of those who fight for the survival of the species that yet remain.