

Augustana College  
Chapel of Reconciliation

**All Things**

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April 13, 2005

Susan Briehl, former director of Holden Village, once called me a “wanton eclectic”, that is, someone who is unrestrainedly excessive when using a variety of sources. With that in mind:

What do the two texts: John 1:1-14 and Colossians 1:15-21 have to say about this week’s theme of sexuality and spirituality? To use a little phrase from Colossians: all things. In Greek: *Ta panta*. All things come together in the Word, in Christ: all things, all of creation. Our spirituality and sexuality are joined together in the Word becoming flesh, reconciled to God through Christ. This morning I would like to comment on this relationship between sexuality and spirituality utilizing these texts from John and Colossians, and also the voices of other theologians and writers. Let me begin with a famous Greek writer, Nikos Kazantzakis, who was often quote in our department by a former and favorite member: Dr. Fritz Rusch.

This quote speaks about how the Incarnation/The Word overcomes the dualism or separation we experience between spirituality/sexuality. Kazantzakis writes: "Within me even the most metaphysical problem takes on a warm physical body which smells of sea, soil, and human sweat. The Word, in order to touch me, must become warm flesh. Only then do I understand—when I can smell, see, and touch" (*Report to Greco* [Cassirer, 1965], p. 43). For hundreds of years the Christian church has struggled with what the Word becoming flesh might mean. How is that Good news for us? Here are some other suggestions:

I’ve been rereading Teilhard de Chardin , a famous Jesuit priest and paleontologist. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin observed: "The prevailing view has been that the body . . . is a *fragment* of the Universe, a piece completely detached from the rest and handed over to a spirit that informs it. In the future we shall have to say that the Body is the very Universality of things.... *My matter* is not a *part* of the Universe that I possess *totaliter*: it is the *totality* of the Universe possessed by me *partialiter*" (*Science and Christ* [Harper & Row, 1968]. Or to paraphrase my favorite philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, We don’t come into a room and say, “Hi, I’m Ann and I brought my body with me.” God does not come to us and say, “Hello/or probably “Peace”, “I’m God and I brought my body with me.” God is body, word become flesh, not just a part, but in its totality. The world is the body of God of which Christ is the head.

We know through our bodies that the Word becomes flesh. Here I love to use Jeanette Winterson, a contemporary British author. Her book, *Written on the Body* is a post-modern love story written in the style of the *Song of Songs*. While not intended as such by Winterson, I think her words can explain how God knows us and we know God; that is, in and through our bodies. Winterson writes about the lover's experience of the beloved: "I would go on knowing her, more intimately than the skin, hair, and voice that I craved. I would have her plasma, her spleen, her synovial fluid. I would recognize her even when her body had long since fallen away." Or in another passage: "The pads of your fingers have become printing blocks, you tap a message on to my skin, tap meaning into my body. Your Morse Code interferes with my heart beat. I had a steady beat before I met you. . . . Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulation of a lifetime gather there." As Christians, we recite in the creed: We believe in the resurrection of the body; that is, not just a part of the body, but the totality of the body. We are part of the universe, whose flesh in all of its natural, historical, and cultural manifestations is embodied, known, redeemed and renewed by the Word. And so with the whole church on earth we can know that "in Christ all things on earth were created," and "he is the head of the body." "And through him God was pleased to reconcile himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross." According to Colossians, the body= 'all things.' Ta panta. All things, that little phrase, puts it it All in perspective. The creation and redemption of humankind "thus appear as a subordinate clause within the larger matrix of creation theology."

We are genetically related to the whole cosmos, God's body. A remark from a philosopher friend makes this come to life, "Imagine being told after all these years that the woman who runs your neighborhood deli is, in fact, your sister. Would this information make a difference? Of course it would. In a similar way, the Epic of Evolution has the potential to affect the manner of beholding and intersecting with the entire natural world. . . . Never mind the lady at the deli—you're genetically related to the sandwich she sells you."

We are a part of the cosmos, of the star dust from which we came and to which we shall return. We are related to all things; we are sisters and brothers with all of creation. And so St. Patrick can write in the hymn we will sing:

I bind unto myself today  
The virtues of the star-lit heaven,  
The glorious suns' life-giving ray,  
The whiteness of the moon at even,  
The flashing of the lightning free,  
The whirling wind's tempestuous shocks  
The stable earth, the deep salt sea  
Around the old eternal rocks.

The connection between spirituality and sexuality is found me in the link between John's emphasis on the Word and the Colossian's emphasis on "all things." All things are reconciled through Christ to God. All things. . . all flesh from day one to day six. Created good, not perfect, but very good. The very water that is sprinkled over the baby

in baptism is the same water of the “deep salt sea around the old eternal rocks,” and of the “warm physical body which smells of sea, soil, and human sweat.” All things. That’s the good news.



## CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

**ELCA SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD ASSEMBLY.** Two students, one male and one female, are needed to represent our student congregation at the **SD Synod Assembly on June 3 and 4**. The event includes worship, learning, and discussion and resolutions considering decisions about the wider church. See Pr. Paul if you are interested or willing to attend.

**CAMPUS MINISTRY OUTREACH BAND** - Applications are now being taken for the new Outreach Band for next year. Application are available on the Narthex table.

**CANLIGHT VIGIL** to remember those victimized by the crime of sexual violence. State Representative Joni Clark Cutler will be speaking on "We Have The Power To Make A Difference". It is our opportunity to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, for those in our families and communities and particularly little Jessica who was murdered this weekend.

**Where: Siverson Lounge (followed by a silent walk around campus)**

**When: Wednesday, April 13th, 7:30 p.m.**

### **THE BODY OF CHRIST: SEXUALITY AND SPIRITUALITY**

**April 11 - 10:00** am chapel sermon Pastor Paul, Knowing The Body: Spirituality and Sexuality

**April 13 - 10:00** am chapel sermon Ann Pederson, Giving the Body :Spirituality and Sexuality

**April 14 - 10:00** convocation, 3:1 room Dr. Dan Spencer, University of Montana, the Body in Pain: "Broken and Being Born"

(The series is sponsored by the Stanley L Olsen Chair of Moral Values, the chapel of reconciliation with a grant from the Philip Knudson Foundation at St. Olaf College.)

### CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Thursday	Chair of Moral Values lecture, 10 am - 3-1 room Dan Spencer, U. Of Montana - "The Body In Pain"
Friday	Worship, 10 am - Sarah Harrold, Senior Speaker
Sunday	Worship, 11 am - Pr. Paul
Monday	Worship, 10 am - Fr. Chuck Cimpl. St. Michael's
Tuesday	Youth Mentors, 10 am
Wednesday	Holy Communion, 10 am - Pr. Paul; Augie Choir Senior Academy