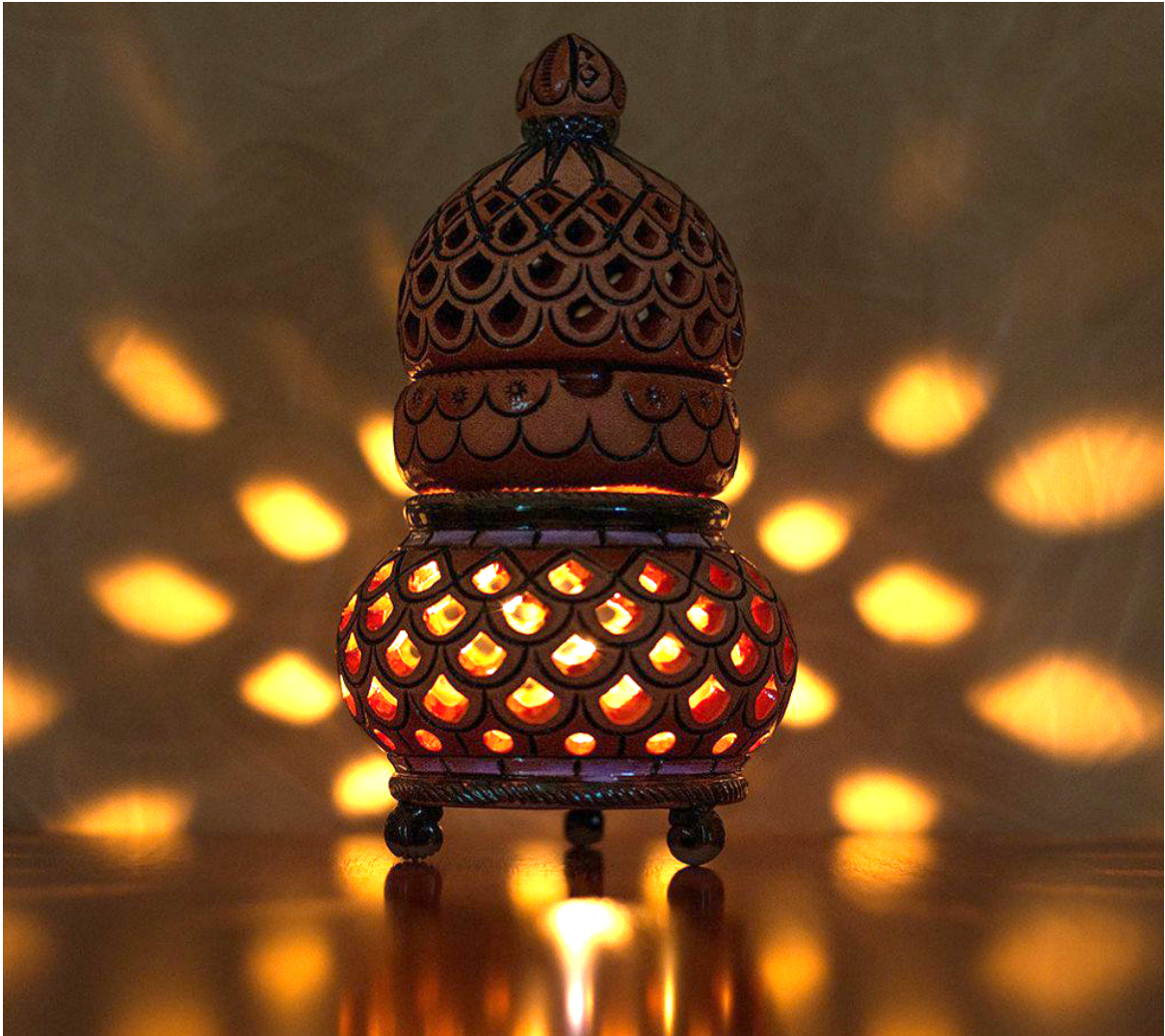


## *Serene Beholding*

*"And your illuminations enlightened and illumed the entire world..."*

*Psalm 77:18 Vulgate translation*



Soft light creates a womb-like spaciousness in my prayer room as I enter to join our communion of contemplation. I enkindle a flame, light a slither of incense and listen to the ancient silence its fragrance infuses into my senses. The mossy aroma stills, calms, settles my body, my mind, as my heart opens like spring blossom petals unfolding. Today climate change advocates have openly met in the streets, creating a visible network of human souls connected to the earth soul. My desire to participate, to affirm and confirm ignites some more. I recall Corrie's refugee circles of public silence, quietly wailing the wail of our refugees, lamenting, inviting, inspiring, peacefully challenging our toxic political system. I feel Love's breath, breathing us into one breath, one love, one heart-world-earth mind loving this planet earth, our home. The music of silence resounds as I settle into the silent ground of infusing love. I feel Omega Love stirring within the urgent longing of earth's body for compassion, for response, for restoration. I yield into Omega's

stirrings, into a deeper and deeper infusion, into an abyss of longing for the communal awakening that we are one. The desire of Jesus resounds: *"May we be one. (Jn17:21)"*



The invitation of the gracious words *"Infuse 2019 in Love"* that Tess wondered about in her recent reflection, has also invited me to become more attentive to the nature of infusing. I too, delighted in Tess's delight in beholding and seeing anew the freshness of spring with its delicate evolving of new life within creation. I beheld too, the melody of goodness and darkness in our world. Tess highlighted our natural contemplative nature that we as a contemplative evolution network are desiring to enhance.

And Robyn's insights into a hermeneutic of networking feels so poignant here. I am reminded that a network is not a fixed identity, or self-referential, self-serving

system. "Networks," Robyn affirms, "operate under the conditions of unbounded connectivity, flow, participation, transparency and authority." For us, this unbounded, transparent flow that has its own innate authority, is the infusing of the Trinity of Love, the Word made flesh, the spiration of Spirit in Matter, the inspiration of Divine Wisdom within human desiring and knowing. We experience the sweet and living knowledge of this divine Wisdom, together, in the loving of infused contemplation, as we gather in communion for prayer each afternoon.

My musings then naturally flow towards the Spanish mystic, John of the Cross (1542-1591), who consistently draws on the language of "infused contemplation" to describe the depthless flow of the loving wisdom of God within us and amongst us. John highlights the inflowing quality of the infusion of this exquisite, intensely intimate, darkly luminous filling with divine life that takes place in the substance, or essence of our soul. *"For contemplation,"* John says, *"is nothing else than a secret and peaceful and loving inflow of God"* (1DN.11). In prayer, John encourages us into *"a peaceful quiet and sweet idleness,"* (1N10.4) where we simply remain loving our Beloved. In the intimacy of stillness and silence, divine Love overflows from the depthless ground of our heart, inflows into every particle of our being and then flows out in ever increasing circles of love, creating an ever-flowing contemplative morphogenic field.





John most frequently evokes the silent music of this flow of contemplation through his luminous metaphor of “dark night.” For John, the “dark night” is the divine inflow infused with the dynamic desire of the love energy of the Word, the Christ, whose luminous presence blinds our senses and spirit, so that unencumbered, we may yield totally into the love-making of the mystical marriage. The opening lines of his *Dark Night* poem carry us into this ongoing darkening as we enter into the opaqueness of the inner cellar of our heart. His haunting imagery reaches into silence, into nothingness, into *nada*:

*One dark night,  
fired with love's urgent longings  
-- ah, the sheer grace! --  
I went out unseen,  
my house being now all stilled. (DN1).*

Ultimately, there is one dark night, one espousal of love with our Beloved that is infused with divine longing. There is one dark ever-unitive contemplation. And, in reflecting on this poem, John accentuates that he is speaking mystically, as he clusters his reflections on the indescribable, inexpressible quality of this infused contemplation that comes to us as obscure darkness. Through multiple illusions to the apophatic, he saturates us in our own inner darkness, emptiness, nothingness, absence, that is a kind of velvety, infusing, unitive darkness.

These stammerings that flow from this dark infusing presence within John, touch our own sense of being infused in Spirit. He affirms: “*The wisdom of this contemplation is the language of God to the soul of Pure Spirit to pure spirit*” (2N17.4). Over and over, John alludes to an ever-loving infusing Spirit-to-spirit presence, beyond words, beyond form, beyond

sensual or spiritual knowing, beyond mind, yet so profoundly unitive and inflowing that we are immersed in: *“an abyss of wisdom which leads into the heart of the science of love.”* (2N17.6). This inflowing secret wisdom is the Beloved whose love wounds, unravels and then knits, interlaces, ones us within the ever flowing infusing of the Love of the Trinity.

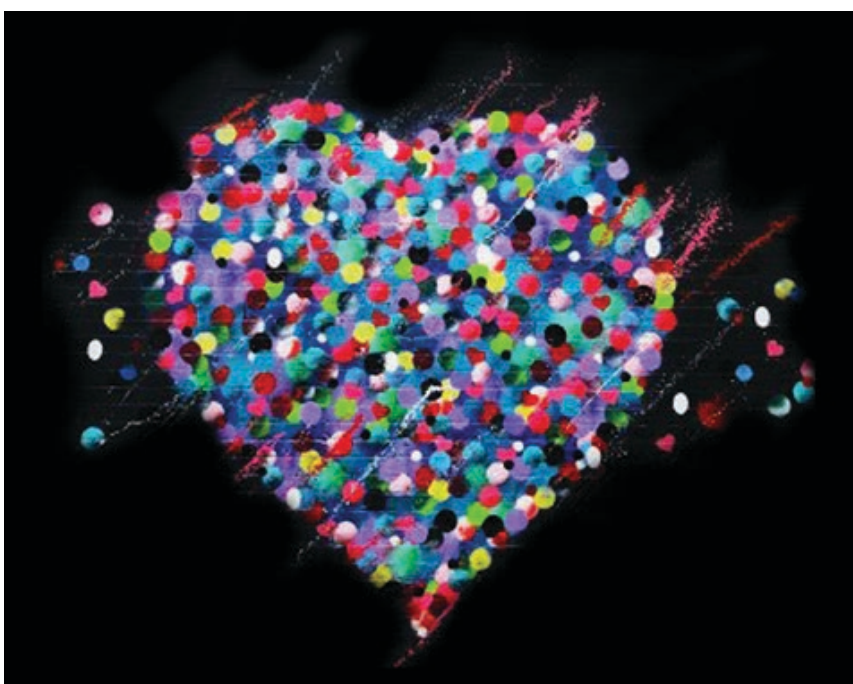
The endless oneness of this womb-like unitive dark night evocatively returns in John’s *Spiritual Canticle* where, he again portrays the great romance between two lovers in the embrace of mystical love-making, in what he now distinguishes as the *“serene night.”* In this phase of the relationship, although we remain in darkness, a new sense of being touched with the spark of divine love and of breathing with the breath of the Spirit within the Trinity engenders a subtle, gentle, stable silence and serenity. John’s poetry ascends and descends as he draws us into the love-song of the nightingale in this serene night:

*The breathing of the air,  
the song of the sweet nightingale,  
the grove and its living beauty  
in the serene night,  
with the flame that is consuming and painless* (SC39).



In the solitude of this spiritual marriage, the serenity of the divine lover infuses our being, with what John calls *“sublime knowledge”* of the grove and its beauty. We can picture the beauty of a Spanish grove, of pristine woodlands untouched by pollution, where John would have walked. Yet, even more, as we are immersed in this beauty, we realize that this grove of creation is, in fact, the Beloved. We behold and see this shared identity in *“beatific and clear contemplation”* (See, SC39.11). In other words, in this serene beholding we are so absorbed in the Beloved, so transparent, so one, we see through the Beloved’s eyes imprinted deep within our heart that we dwell within this grove of Love. Our hearts become enflamed.

Now, as solitude, tranquillity and freedom of spirit expand, we darkly sense the luminosity of the enkindled point of the heart of our spirit. The deep caverns of feelings blinded by the delicate touchings and shadings of the Holy Spirit (LF3.41) now glow and reflect warmth and light. John's words from his *Living Flame of Love* invite us into an ever more radiant reflecting of this burning Love. His glowing wisdom affirms our enflamed oneness: "(H)aving become enkindled lamps within the splendours of the divine lamps, (we) return it to the one who gave it, and with the same exquisite beauty" (LF3.77). This call to become translucent to the divine shalom as we live in the serene night, in the midst of all the turmoil of our world, invites us to a powerful way of being a network of lovers. Calm, peaceful, serene, grounded in divine shalom, we become a contemplative presence in our world that we deeply know to be "a grove of living beauty." Together, heart centre to heart centre, we behold serenely, and love our earth as the body of God.



In deep humility, as the point of our heart enkindled by the divine fire glows, may we create an inter-lacing web, a flow, a continuous reflection of light begetting light, a network of luminous contemplation.

May we give to our Beloved the same light and warmth the Beloved infuses in us. May we be Beloved's to each other and create beauty, peace and serenity within the one exquisite heart-

earth-mind-soul, the noosphere that is ours to share. Together we imagine and dream the dream of earth that is love, light and serenity for all.

*Kerrie Hide*

All references are from *The Collected Works of John of the Cross*. Translated by Kieran Kananaugh O.C.D and Otilio Rodriquez O.C.D (Washington: ICS, 1991). DN=Dark Night, SC=Spiritual Canticle, LF=Living Flame of Love. Book, chapter and paragraph numbers are given.