

The radiant presence of Christ.

Back in the cold and damp days of October I planted bulbs in my garden. It is the end of April now. April gets its name from the Latin word, 'aperire', which means to open. The spring flowers that have emerged from my bulbs are just beginning to open up. Their lovely form and colour have changed the whole outlook of my dreary garden. They have brought it alive and I keep finding myself drawn to looking at these flowers. It's amazing that the presence of just a few dancing daffodils and primroses has set the whole place into radiance. But it has.



Their beauty reflects a deeper meaning too. In this season of Easter, the Gospels call us to open our eyes, hearts, minds, and imaginations to the presence of the Risen Christ. Time and again the disciples failed to recognise the Risen Lord. Their minds and hearts were closed and they missed his presence in many places: at the empty tomb, in conversations on the road and even in 153 fish in straining nets and breakfast by a roaring fire.

It takes an open heart and mind to 'see' the presence of Christ around us. Irish poet Patrick Kavanah had a gift for doing just this. He expresses this in his poem, 'Street corner Christ':

**I saw Christ today, at a street corner stand,
In the rags of a beggar he stood, he held ballads in his hand.**

**He was crying out; 'Two for a penny, will anyone buy
The finest ballads ever made, from the stuff of joy?'**

**But the blind and deaf went past, knowing only there
An uncouth ballad seller, with tail matted hair.**

**And I whom men call fool, his ballads bought,
Found Him whom the pieties have vainly sought.**

Kavanagh had a passion for looking for the Incarnate God in the ordinary stuff of life that surrounded him. Nothing fell outside of his field of vision – from seeds sown in the dark clay below the Monaghan hills to tail matted ballad sellers on the streets of Dublin. They all heralded the beauty of the Risen One. God is more ordinary than we often allow God to be. God isn't 'out there', distant, unapproachable and extraordinary. No. God is right inside each and every one of us. Each human body is a temple of God's beauty-filled Spirit. Each human heart is the place where God, who loves us and yearns for us to know and accept this completely, is present.

Today is the Feast of St Catherine of Sienna (29th April) who also spoke of this truth when she said:

"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire."

Awareness of this sort cannot be forced. It can only be awakened. This is slow and delicate work but it is also very beautiful. Like the bulbs in my garden, my learning heart is experiencing April. It is opening and awakening and there are moments when I know, deep down, the truth of God's presence in the experiences of my day. They are moments of real awakening and I treasure them. One such moment happened late one evening last week. It was dark and I was taking the washing off my line. The lights streamed into the darkness from the kitchen, where my three girls were sitting around the table, cups of tea in hand, chatting about their day. I watched the interaction between them, saw their animated discussion and knew that there, right in the heart of my home, God's beauty – filled Spirit was too. A beautiful presence, that set the place into radiance.