

Daniel's reflection for week beginning 10th October Autumn brings an open heart

To everything there is a season. Autumn yearns for connection and completion. It is a season of harvesting, of putting shape, order and blessing into things before the gathering up, the clearing away, the turning to a fallow time, waiting for the next awakening. It brings an open heart to what is yet to happen. Autumn is a threshold moment. . . .

Blessed John Henry Newman spoke about God's individual call to each of us to fulfil a certain purpose before we die. Infused into our hearts at birth, and purified, emphasised and celebrated at baptism, our role in life is to be true to that compelling commission to reveal something special about God. Without our commitment to that first and deepest vocation, there will forever be a missing thread in the divine tapestry.

There are certain threshold moments when we sense something of this destiny to which we are called. Such moments unsettle us. We long to hear the *cantus firmus* (the enduring melody) sound louder in our souls, for that vague horizon of our ultimate vocation to become clearer in our hearts. And there will always be one autumn in our lives when this restless compulsion for completion seems particularly compelling. Urgently we seek to see the whole picture while there's time, to accomplish the calling. . . .

Sometimes I see this present time in my life as the last chance to discover that other place where the light lives; that promised land towards which we are forever dedicated; that unfamiliar vantage point discerning the true north of our scrambled vision. And yet, is it really so unfamiliar after all? Maybe it is not another place that's new, but another way of being present in the place we have always known. Maybe the shores we search for do not belong to a foreign land, but were already glimpsed in the original vision of the divine child that lives in us all.

'Fear not,' said Thomas Merton to Karl Barth in a conversation about music and wisdom, 'though you have grown up to be a theologian, Christ remains a child in you ... there is in us a Mozart who will be our salvation.'

It is the child who holds and reveals the *cantus firmus* in us, who remembers God's dream for us. The task is to recover this child – through waiting, praying and above all by suffering. This enterprise costs us, as T.S. Eliot puts it, 'not less than everything.'

In a monastery in Braga, Tibet, the poet David Whyte was astonished at the compassion in the carved faces along the walls, lit by handheld lamps, carrying 'such love in solid wood'. He wished that all of us would allow the invisible carver's hand 'to bring the deep grain of love to the surface'. And is this when the inner child awakens too? Do we reach our original, essential vocation and destiny only when pain and joy become one within us? Whyte ends his poem 'The faces at Braga':

*Our faces would fall away
until we, growing younger toward death
every day, would gather all our flaws in celebration
to merge with them perfectly, impossibly, wedded to our essence,
full of silence from the carver's hands*

(Treasured and Transformed pp 91 - 94)