

Daniel's reflection for week beginning April 23rd – Being in your Element

Benedict was a hopeless student. I know because I taught him. He failed all his exams; he drank too much; he was a lazy waster he; just did not fit into university life. But on the rugby pitch he was pure magic. Like quicksilver he shimmied and dummied, dropped a shoulder changed direction and was over for a try. Or again, delicately poised, he would turn on a sixpence and with exquisite balance, release an impossible dropkick. On the field Ben was in his element.

My brother Joseph had Down's syndrome. Joseph moved to a different drummer sometimes out of step, sometimes awkward. But once the music began to play, Joseph was transformed. Oblivious of all else except his body's unique intimacy with the rhythm, he moved with stunning grace and beauty. When dancing, our Joseph was in his element.

Rainer Maria Rilke is a lovely poet. He wrote about the ungainly way a swan walks or waddles to the river. It is not a pretty sight. But once in the water, something beautiful happens. Everything is changed. In calm elegance the lumbering swan is poetry in motion, now carried by the water. She is in her element.

Have you ever seen the still-shown classic Yorkshire film 'Kes'? It is about a Barnsley boy, always in trouble and an inveterate sloucher, totally out of kilter with the school scene, whose passion and soul stirred for a bird - the kestrel he tamed and in which he found a meaning for his life. With his beloved Kes, he was in his element.

Now that I'm older, I can identify those shared moments when I'm not stuck, when I know that I'm at my best, at my most authentic - those moments for which I believe I was created, the sacred times when I'm in my element. Can you, dear reader, at whatever age you may be, identify those experiences in your ever-changing life, when you know that this is what you really were born for, are destined for, when you are at one with the flow of life inside you, when you feel truly free?

I only write about these things because I believe there is something wonderfully healing and life-giving about being able to name and claim those special and holy parts of our daily lives when we shine like the sun, when we are truly in our element. Maybe this is what St Paul meant when he wrote about bringing our 'hidden self' out into the open so that it may transform our own life, the life of our friends and enemies, the life of our country and planet.

(Prism of Love: pp47,48)