

Daniel's reflection for week beginning 13th February – The beloved Body of a God 'who so loved the world ...'

(2nd of two reflections on Eucharist given at retreats)

God was delighted to become human. Like parents' love creates the baby, God's love too overflowed into a baby 2000 years ago. Like parents, too, God was delighted with us and God is still delighted with us now. God became human so as to reveal an unconditional love for us. Nothing can stop God loving us always. No matter what, there is nothing we can do to make God love us one bit more, or one bit less. God wanted to become human, physical so as to reach us, heal us, love us in that human form. (1 John: 1,1). When we look at the baby Jesus in the crib at Christmas these are some of the astonishing feelings that should flood our hearts!

When God became human in Jesus, God became human in all people and in all creation. Grace is everywhere. The great divide between the sacred and the secular is now over. To live is holy; To be is blast. We are now called to see the face of Christ in everyface, the heart of God in every heart.

This is especially true of family life. All that goes into the intimate life of the family is a very real presence of God. That is why the popes have called it the domestic church. Staying faithful to your husband or wife, giving your life for your children, continually forgiving them, delighting in them, the endless sacrifices that parents make- all of these are a worship of God. We are forever in God's presence, in every word we say, in everything we do. With all our words, thought, actions, we bless and heal and save those around us.

Since the Incarnation the ordinary has become extraordinary. God's lovelies shimmering beneath everything that happens to us each day - in all our experiences. What we often regard as merely human, merely ordinary, merely daily and routine, are nothing of the sort. They are already shining with grace. It is in the everyday things that we meet and experience the presence of God. But we need eyes to see this. The same is true of the whole world, of our expanding universe, of the immense mystery of the cosmos. All are the beloved body of a God 'who so loved the world'.

To the bread and wine of the Eucharist, then, we bring that understanding. At every mass we try to recognise the deeper meanings of the bread and wine. We see, in the bread and wine, the symbol of all creation, but billions of planets, many of them perhaps carrying life and intelligence, and the millions of varieties of flora and fauna around the world. Think now of the enthralling TV programmes of Brian Cox, David Attenborough and many more. I watch these with a great sense of worship of our amazing God who created all the wonders they show us!

In the bread and wine, we see our own burdens, our failures, our sins, our shadows, our secrets, our hopes, our dreams, our loves, our pain, our loss, our despair, our joy- we bring them all! In the bread and wine, we recognise every single moment of every single day, every single word and thought and action, every single breath and heartbeat, every feeling and emotion that fill each day of our lives are gathered.

And then, over that bread and wine, over everything we have reflected on, regarding Creation, Incarnation, our lives, our loves our daily experiences- overall of that the voice of God, in human form, reminds us again and again,

'This is my body,

This is my blood.'

We need to hear the astonishing proclamation every week because we forget. Some kind of original sin makes us doubt, disbelieve, resist, forget this revelation about the meaning of our story - Creation, Incarnation and Eucharist, each person - God created them all.

Nothing can separate us from the grace of Christ. Even in this life, we safely live in the heart of God and we ourselves are now God's shining presence in the streets where we live.