

(In Year of the Heart for the month of June, Daniel writes

'My intentions in this month's reflections are to offer an approach 'from below', so to speak, from the point of view of the cosmos itself- thus making a new effort to intrinsically link all the elements and all the dimensions that constitute Eucharist celebration. My intention is to offer the reader a vision of the Eucharist that does not threaten orthodox doctrine but rather deepens and enriches the believers participation at the Lords table each week.' Our weekly reflections for June will all be taken from this chapter.)

Daniel's reflection for week beginning 5th June - Celebration of a Love-story

Sacrament, in Christian terms, is not meant to be a notion or practice imposed from without, but rather to be regarded in the light of a world already filled and permeated with Love's essence -a world that tends toward the celebration in symbol and word of its own amazing story, beauty and hopes. The symbolic power of the sacramental action is to remember, affirm, celebrate and intensify the love and meaning at the heart of all creation; to remind ourselves, as the incarnation did, that dualism is not from God, and that in truth, in historical reality, Love has always been Incarnate.

'Everything which God created millions of years ago, and everything which will be created by God after millions of years ... God is creating all that in the innermost and deeper realms of the soul. God's being is my being and God's primordial being is my primordial being. Wherever I am there is God.' (Violet Madge)

Everyone is graced with the capacity for this vision. For each one, As for Francis of Assisi, the sun and moon, fire and water, the four directions and all the elements, animals and humans, all creatures, our windows on God, or, more accurately, faces of God. Even the smallest particle of creation is a theophany, a sacrament a revelation of God.

'Apprehend God in all things,' urges Meister Eckhart, 'for God is in all things. Every single creature is full of God and is a book about God. Every creature is a word of God. If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature, even a caterpillar, I would never have to prepare a sermon. So full of God is every creature.'

We therefore need new eyes to read the wind, sand and stars, people's hands, hearts and faces, beneath the first level of appearance. It is the vision of heart we seek for here. 'It is only with the heart that one sees clearly,' explains the Little Prince, 'what is essential is invisible to the eye.' There are surprises and special gifts to help us make this transition - moments which stand out from all others, gracious moments when the paradigm shifts and a single leaf becomes every tree, each holy stream is the underground river of Love, a rock speaks prophecies and a smile transforms a winter heart. We say that such small epiphanies are sacramental because in them we glimpse through the windows of wonder something of the joy of God Incarnate in everything.

The Eucharist, I began to see, is a sacramental moment ritualised into certain times and places. The actual emotional vision, the inspirational moment, rarely coincides with the actual formal ceremony but nevertheless the Eucharist becomes more exciting and alluring when participated in as a liturgical celebration of life already sacramental, in its own right, by virtue of creation- the first incarnation.

The Eucharist, then, is of a piece with the rest of reality and life semi; it is the institutionalised expression in symbol of a story of love as felt in human hearts. These hearts are, in turn, the self-expression in humans consciousness of the evolving love-story of the universe. And before that again, the whole cosmos, of which the universe is a part, is the self-expression, in time and space, of the first divine love in the heart of God.

The bread and the wine, therefore, around which we gather have a long history. The seeds, in fact, were planted long time ago, in bright darkness before time began.

Creation had waited for billions of years to achieve self-consciousness. Once this breakthrough was accomplished, the cosmos then needed to celebrate its incredible life story with its mysterious beginning, its hazardous evolution, its split second timing and its relentless success. For with the advent of humanity- its new, first and unique heart and mind- this became possible. And the Eucharist is one of its rich expressions. And this expression has to be symbolic- there is no other way that such a cosmic love story could be encapsulated in time and space. 'The earth, like an apple, is placed on the table.' In the sacramental mode, with bread and wine, the world is acknowledging its very being as flowing from the womb of God at the beginning of time and in each passing moment. Through the human voices, gestures and sacramental action of its offspring, the universe is in worship before its creator, offering itself to its incomprehensible lover- God in the ecstasy of its joys and the bitterness of its sorrows.

There is of course more to the Eucharist than the long-awaited celebration of exalting joy, praise and thanksgiving as the patient soul of the Earth finally evolved into a richer mode of life in its humanity. What I mean is that humanity itself, in its breakthrough into intelligence and human love, as especially in its famous visionaries, prophets and messiahs, has been able to reflect back to its cosmic ancestry, very sketchy but unbelievably exciting revelations about its origins, history of evolution and maybe even its destiny. The Eucharist brings to self-consciousness, identifies and names for the universe some of the deepest dimensions of its miraculous growth. It achieves this because once upon a time, a human being a Man, one of those at the forefront of the revolutionary journey, enlightened by Love herself recapitulative in his life, death and resurrection watch already going on in the birth from nothingness of the cosmos, and in the dying and living that is the constant in its growth. That is, therefore, a central and stunning truth revealed and celebrated in the Eucharistic drama. Because of the history of this Man, millions of people believe that the ubiquitous death built into the innermost heart of the cosmos and of every creature of life is essential to the love the power of the universe relentlessly onward to the glorious realisation of our full dignity and majesty.

The play in the struggle between the dying and rising in the loving heart of the living cosmos, together with the eventual outcome of delight of that sometimes bloody conflict, is revealed, clarified, named, owned, and celebrated by the universe at every true Eucharistic gathering, with a directness and intensity like that of the Incarnation itself. Thus in a ritual in time and space, involving bread and wine and words, in one privileged and symbolic moment, the eternal significance of the mighty cosmos is encapsulated.

(from Year of the heart pp131-134)