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Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 9th June –

Pentecost Sunday - Chasing the Wild Dream

With the coming of summer my mother, even in her nineties, would recall for us a memory of pure delight from her early teenage years. On the rare occasions when she and my Auntie Nell were released from the drudgery of their work, they would wheel out a rusty, ramshackle old bike. One pedalled, the other hung on for dear life as they bumped their way down a North Cork bohereen, both shouting at the top of their voices 'Be gone dull care. I give you to the winds.'

During these weeks between Easter and Pentecost we may ask whether the breaking out of the tomb is another image of all our innate longing for freedom? Can the Risen Christ be seen as a figure of humanity's relentless desire to transcend mortality? Is the Ascension an endorsement of God's irrepressible energy placed from the beginning in every human heart? Does Pentecost celebrate the imperative to 'go forth', to travel the world with open hearts and minds of light?

The compulsion towards 'beyondness', the quest towards liberation, was in Jesus' blood. He was constantly engaged in liberating people from all kinds of restrictions on their freedom, from the blockages that kept them constricted, from the chains that prevented their flight into another way of being. His utter recklessness in walking into the traps of his enemies, into the garden of his blood, up the hill of his death and into the awful tomb of his darkness and of human sin – all prepared him for the cosmic journey, the final breakthrough, that alerts and draws all of us to the margins of our own awesome possibilities.

Easter, Ascension and Pentecost inspire, gather and celebrate all the daily breakthroughs in our lives – the brave, prophetic word, the refusal to become a victim, the surrender of ego-control, the telling of the truth, the courage to be. When you are committed to this way of living your life you have, as Janet Kalven wrote, 'set sail on another ocean without star or compass, going where the argument leads, shattering the certainties of centuries.' This is a Pentecost invitation we would often rather ignore.

There was a wildness in Jesus, as there was in John the Baptist before him; a relentless courage that was of the essence of his divine humanity. He was forever testing the boundaries, pushing the limits of his own potential, weighing up the wishes of his Father. He was driven to take to the Jerusalem road, to confront the people who wanted to destroy him - but only so that soon he would transcend all limitations, and in doing so, empower us with the divine potential to walk the path of our own destiny.

However, while Jesus achieved the final breakthrough once for all, we are still only on the way. The journey ahead is littered with choices - to keep taking the risks of change, to keep climbing the mountain of grace, to keep leaving what is not nourishing us. On days when we are not afraid, we follow our bliss, we take the high road, we are, as the poet said, 'insane for the light'. But too often the price is too high. The French novelist Andre Gide wrote, 'One does not discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time.' Most of us are not famous for this kind of 'launching out into the deep' – the last logo of John Paul 11.

Even though redeemed we do not always choose the light. We are transplanted but we refuse to grow. A vista is revealed, but we are afraid to contemplate it. We shrink from the shadow of the Cross that falls over everything. Open horizons have been painfully won for us yet we prefer instead the safety of the circled wagons, the three secure tents of Mount Tabor. Though forgiven we do not forgive; resentment stays curled up like a snake in the fallen leaves of our lives until suddenly it strikes, and we tumble, once more, down the ladder of our good intentions.

Yet a free and beckoning God will not leave us alone – a God whose Celtic image was the Wild Goose, a God who stirs in us a passion for another country where everything is different, who urgently urges us to chase the wild dream. To travel, to search, to hope - the Pentecost imperative whispers relentlessly within us. The first journey, then, in the end, is the journey inwards – into the land of our own ambiguous, infinite mystery.

To be truly human is to be forever pursuing a subtle and elusive dream. Many grow old with the glint of adventure still in their eyes. The girl in W.B. Yeats' poem may be your lost treasure. She may be your dream companion, your dream accomplishment, your dream horizon. She may be the spirit of your never-ending Ithaca-journey, that wild, unfathomable sanctuary deep within your own heart;

*When I am old with wandering through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone, and kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass, and pluck till time and times are done,
The silver apples of the moon, the golden apples of the sun.*

(Excerpt from Tablet article)