

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 21st October –

What difference does this remarkable re-discovery of the intense love and profound meaning at the very core of our faith offer to us? How does this theology and spirituality transform us personally and our world too?

(Each of the five points below is an attempt to bring together the essential teaching of the last few weeks' reflections. We suggest you take one point each day this week and spend time reflecting on how it strikes you.)

1 Here we have a logical and rational attempt to explain the faith in terms of a renewed incarnational theology and evolutionary process. It thus is free of many of the unnecessary flaws, regulations, misleading emphases that have led Christians to walk away from the true teachings of Jesus Christ, the Human One. It attempts to critique, purify, reform and rebuild the CatholicChristian Church, urging the hierarchy to leave its entrenched traditions and to risk an openness to science, to the world and to the Holy Spirit's guidance. Without inexplicable U-turns by a volatile, unreliable and selective God, there is, in this theological perspective, an authentic and logical flow of invincible love from the very first breath of God at the beginning of creation to the final divine embrace at the end of time. In this seminal and orthodox theology, the Christian faith is aligned and empowered with a focussed and graced energy, consistent throughout its preparation, birth and consequent history.

2 This alternate perspective offers us a radically different and transformed image of God. Now we have a God of many beautiful names, none of them adequate to tell of the divine essence. God's unconditional love is beyond our imagination. There is nothing we can do to change that eternal truth. It is like being offered an excitingly new, utterly nourishing, even astonishing story about God, ourselves, and our mutual, deeply experienced relationship – a relationship that is personal and intimate, yet utterly communal, and forever true.

3 The perspective of a theology of nature and grace combined with the current understanding of the New Universe Story, of a Creation-for-Incarnation evolution reveals a whole new picture of the central and fascinating role of Jesus. He is not merely an unplanned solution to God's first beautiful idea for Creation gone wrong; he is, utterly and completely, God's first beautiful idea for our wonderfully evolving the world. He is, in fact, the beginning, middle and end of the whole Creation story, bigger than Christianity, the culmination and completion of the Father's loving dream for all humanity, all creation, and every possible evolution into the future. No one religion is big enough to fathom this eternal mystery. All together, in loving dialogue with the One Great Spirit and each other, humanity will humbly move towards the redeeming Light of understanding, consecrating our efforts to bring God's dream to an astonishing completion.

4 The focus on God-made-flesh helps us to wonder at the true meaning of who we really are in our own humanity, and in the part we are called to play in the completing of God's work, in the perfecting of the planet. We ponder what it might mean to be created in God's image, to actually be God incarnate in our relationships within ourselves, with each other, with the world, and indeed, with all of Creation. That is the only way we can experience Incarnation in our daily lives, the only way we can, like a Fourth person, join in the dance of the Blessed Trinity in our hearts – the final flourishing and fulfilment toward which all true soul-dancing tends.

The thrust of the Community called Church, its sacraments and teachings, its very *raison d'être* is to keep this foundation and horizon at the centre of our lives - to remind us of this vision because we forget so quickly; to heal our weakness and fear because of our inherent darkness; to help us repent of every sin, personal and communal that diminished this vision of a world that is made for heaven; to celebrate with each other because our hearts are made for joy. And to stay forever true to the transparent beauty of our Saviour.

5 It is only in this reemerging theology and spirituality of Creation and grace that the deadly dualism at the core of our current sin/redemption beliefs can be eradicated. Far from being in opposition to it, it is only by a deep involvement with the world and its wonders that we can ever hope to grasp the beauty of God. Incarnation urges us to find the face of God in the depth, resonance and interiority of all created things, and of all that we perceive through our senses. From the mundane and menial to the inspiring and awesome, the divine shimmers through. Nothing is 'ordinary' any more. Simply put, God reveals God's self to us through what unfolds as our life along with every visible thing around us. All that that happens, all that is, is another revelation of divine beauty; every human experience, when reflected on, an intimacy with God.

Postscript (repeat from intro): Everything in the above summary springs from traditional and 'safe' sources – an orthodox theology, spirituality, scriptural scholarship, mysticism and teachings. For many urgent reasons, particularly the vision of our present Pope, it is all being again explored. Something wonderful is struggling to get free. 'I am about to do a new thing. Now it springs forth. Do you not perceive it?' (Isaiah 43:19). There is now a unique tipping point to which we must lend our weight. A moment of grace is present. It is flowing forth in our consciousness, in all human hearts, in every community, at all levels of life. At this particularly critical and fateful time do you really have, in the words of Pope Frances, 'a big heart, open to God'?

(From one of Fr. Daniel's unpublished papers 2018)