

Human Face of Divine Love (part 1) Week Beginning April 6th

One wintry evening I went to see Les Misérables. I had heard about its spiritual power, its contrasting images of God, its compelling emotional resonance within the human soul. In particular, the words 'To love another person is to see the face of God' from the final song of the film seem to reverberate at ever-deeper levels in many hearts. People sense a profound truth in them without quite knowing why. They hint at the unsuspected and astonishing closeness between the human and the divine, between heaven and earth.

To say 'I love you' to someone, some spiritual writers believe, is like saying 'rejoice that your name is written in heaven' (Lk 10:20). In these earthly graces we experience the presence and promise of God. We are sacraments for each other, carriers of divinity, radiant with God's incarnate being. Such is the power of human love in Les Mis, Archbishop emeritus George Carey believes that some moments in the film's story of the misery and ecstasy of human life contain 'the finest description of grace outside the pages of the New Testament'.

St John Chrysostom wrote that 'Whatever unlocks the human heart, unlocks the heart of God as well'. St Augustine said that 'the love with which we love each other is the same love as that with which God loves us'. When costly, enduring love emerges between people something new and beautiful is created. Every healing that love brings to a lost soul is a sacramental event. In all the aspirations of the human spirit another face of God is revealed.

This is incarnate spirit in time, place, flesh and free will. The mystery of faith, correctly understood, reveals that creation, evolution and all the capacities of humanity for death and life are revealed as embraced, healed and transformed from within by the God of Jesus. The whole heart-wrenching story of Les Misérables with its extremes of tragedy, ignominy and despair, with its searing emotion and passion, its human endurance in the face of utter loss, loneliness and longing, is, in faith and fact, the incarnate presence of the Christian God. There is no longer any competition between the world and God, between the secular and the sacred. The evolving planet earth itself is, in fact, the body of God made visible. We no longer look up to the heavens for God; we now explore more deeply the human realities of our daily lives.

Sacramental moments of intimacy with God are strewn all around us. These are the daily places of revelation. But we must dig deeply to divine the hidden spring, to mine the immortal diamond.

(from 'Treasured and Transformed', published March 2014)