

2012 - 30th November

5. The Work of the Mystic

The Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh finds God 'in the bits and pieces' of daily life. Writing about the loving mystery that is easily overlooked and ignored because of its hidden nature, Karl Rahner feels the need to 'dig it out, so to speak, from under the refuse of the ordinary business of life'. This detection of the quiet gift of the abundant life waiting to be discovered in the shadow and light of each night and day, is the work of the mystic. There is no doubt that we are called to awaken and nourish the mystic already alive and well within each one of us. To deny this child of wonder within us, to refuse to acknowledge our lonely mystic, is to reduce our life to a grey dullness, to starve our imagination, to stifle the Holy Spirit and to make God sad.

Mysticism has to do with the search for hidden love and meaning, for the experience of the abiding, absolute mystery of God, in the ordinary things that happen during our days and nights. This is particularly true of the positive and wonder-filled moments that come our way.

The beauty, joyfulness or goodness of a particular experience might well be a compelling revelation of the presence of God. For example, experiences in which we witness a majestic sunset, celebrate with a faithful friend, are overcome by the immensity of the ocean, are unconditionally loved by a parent, wonder at the splendour of the stars, play with a child, marvel at the grandeur of a mountain range, or delight in the passion of a lover, can all be powerful experiences of the absolute mystery. Our desire to be increasingly attentive to the presence of God would lead us to contemplate moments such as these and all the everyday instances of joy, peace, beauty and goodness that we so often take for granted.

We all carry a child-mystic within us; that mysticism, in its real meaning, is not as remote as we often assume. Christians must become mystics who are attuned to the mysterious light that shines behind all that happens.

(Passion for the Possible p 24)