

Daniel's reflection for week-beginning 12th November - The Eucharist's wide embrace

The table of the Eucharist stretches to embrace all that is. Our Catholic tradition protects a deep Christian cosmology enshrined in the elemental symbols of bread and wine. Current literature is beginning to resurrect a most moving and beautiful sacramental theology where the Eucharistic liturgy assumes cosmic significance. This is the aspect of our weekend worship that theologian Fr Dermot Lane hopes will be more imaginatively celebrated, especially today, 'in view of the presence of so much ecological degradation and destruction of God's creation'.

Every time we celebrate the saving mystery, we remember and reactivate God's initial creative work and God's subsequent and continuing redemptive action in the past and present. We affirm, celebrate and intensify the constant presence of grace in our midst from the fiery beginning of our cosmic story, through the billions of years of evolution, into the current thrusting, straining and groaning of the world, forever painfully giving birth to new beauty. In the Prologue to his gospel, John reminds us that Love has always been incarnate. That is the mighty love story that we celebrate around the table of the Lord of the universe. The celebration is about the liberating force of this sacred memory, with its assurance about the wholeness and holiness of all the dimensions of creation. It is prophetic in signaling a most powerful counter-sign to the dualistic and divisive greed that is decimating the resources of Mother Earth.

Getting our minds, or rather our imaginations, around all of this is not easy. That is why we are gifted with the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the sacrament of the holiness of these loving and community-building aspirations that are forever birthed in the human heart. It is the weekly reminder and guarantee that this is so, that nothing is wasted, that all in the end is harvest. The widespread and deep-seated mistake of dualism, where the sacred is set up as over against the secular, makes it very difficult for many searching Christians to feel secure in such a neglected but thoroughly orthodox tradition. While their hearts rejoice in the recognition of this beautiful vision of the love and meaning at the centre of life, their minds are conditioned by a grimmer and more barren story of a basically wicked world.

The amazing insight we grapple with today is about the humanity of God, the focus of the real presence of Jesus in our world, the intimate movement of the indwelling spirit within our most secret and often ambiguous desires. A creation spirituality is dedicated to identifying the authentic presence of God in the emerging experiences of everyone. Whether trivial or important, whether about disappointments or achievements, whether about fear, hope or pain – in these places we find what spiritual writer Hugh Lavery called 'the really real'.