

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 28th October –

I hope you did not find our last few Weekly Reflections too difficult. We have spent decades exploring the personal transformation that happens when we apply the implications of Incarnation to our personal lives and loves. But without embracing the whole achievement and mystery of Creation and Evolution like we are trying to do, we will never understand the full wonder and graced magic of a fleshed God. So please have another go at making all this work and play central to your life. 'If we do not try to understand Creation and Evolution in its beauty, if we do not 'get it right,' as St Thomas Aquinas said, 'then we will never understand God.' The Energy called God: the Evolution called the Holy Spirit is an unpublished paper of mine, offered in six parts .Part 1 this week.(Spring 2018.) *Daniel O'Leary*

Part 1 Everything Belongs and is Already Within

When I look at the utter magic of nature, at the exquisite colouring and shaping of all things, the endless variety of species, the time and tuning of things, the rhythm and rhyme of things, the miracles of scientific discoveries, the astonishing newness of life's unfolding, I say to myself 'Is this source, force and energy of life the same mystery that we call God; the God we worship as the Father of Jesus, the God we receive and become one with in the intimacy of Holy Communion?' I ask myself if this is one true way of entering into the delightful meaning of Incarnation, the mystery that defines Christianity.

When I stand in wonder before a Van Gogh or a Caravaggio, when I am deeply moved by the strains of a Mozart or a Beethoven, when I am transported by the words and imagery of a Shakespeare or a Heaney, is this a primary and an authentic experience of the incarnate essence of the Christian God? Is it not at least as authentic an experience of the divine as the more explicitly religious and ritualistic expressions of worship we enact? Are these experiences, in fact, for the Christian, the only valid and incontrovertible experiences of God's true nature and real presence? And, rather than conflicting with each other in any way, do they not, in fact, complement each other. Is not the role of the distinct sacraments that of keeping us forever in mind of the wider sacramentality of the whole world; we celebrate liturgy knowing that it is always pointing away from itself, daily affirming the truth of the Incarnation – that our Christian God is a human God and can ever be experienced only in so far as we truly experience our own humanity and the lives we live.

Sometimes, it seems to me, there is too great a distance between our 'two' experiences of God – the liturgical in church, and the natural, the real in the world; so great, in fact, that the connection has been lost, the trail has gone cold. They mostly run along parallel lines. But are they not one? We have forgotten the amazing revelation of Incarnation that heals that separation. Suppose we look at the daily reality of the furrowing blade that dissects the earth, the seeds that are sown in the fertile brown soil; or we think of the world wide electronic connections across the oceans and continents connecting us all like a cosmic web; or we find ourselves in a city or airport where the intense and rapid movement of people driven by a million different pursuits is almost too much for us to take in, or we find ourselves in contexts utterly foreign to our usual habitat, or with people whose understanding of life and God is totally different to ours. And suppose then that we go to Mass. How often do we connect those two 'presences' of God – the natural, the graced? Does the one inform the other? Does our understanding of 'sacramentality' reach far enough, like an infinite umbrella or web or leaf of veins, to hold all in the one loving embrace? Does the threadbare wafer unite all these experiences into the intimacy, into the one vibrating, intensely alive beating heart of Mystery herself? How consciously do we identify the raw, natural, sometimes shocking indwelling of Mystery in every startling or insignificant or chaotic happening the world over, with the God of religion? When we go to Mass do we close the doors on to the secular streets of a so-called Godless city behind us, or do we carefully and adoringly bring it all in with us, knowing that not to do so would be to turn our backs on God, on Christian Incarnation? When we eat and drink the holy bread and wine are we consciously and physically embracing the reality of the miracles of love, pain and hope that pulse through the hearts and minds of those struggling, worthy, perhaps churchless people we all too often refer to as 'unspiritual' or 'worldly'?