

Daniel's reflection for week beginning March 12th – Everywhere and Nowhere

It is communication that absorbs so much time in modern life. Periods of stillness are considered a luxury, yet those times of silent contemplation connect us with the earth and with God.

Breathing is the very experience of life, of being, of unity – and of God. In his *The Naked Now*, Richard Rohr OFM explains that the name and nature of God can only be breathed. The correct pronunciation of the Hebrew 'Yahweh' is an attempt to imitate the very sound of inhalation and exhalation. Notice what happens when you gently breathe in for 'Yah' and out for 'weh' a few times. It brings a sense of peace. It is the invisible life force that links all created things. The one thing we unknowingly do every moment of our lives is therefore to speak the unifying name of God. This makes it our first and last word as we enter and leave the world. The baby arrives gasping for breath. She is gasping for life. She is gasping for God. The individual umbilical cord is broken only so that a more universal intimacy may begin. Our first breath, and every breath, brings us into deep and vital conversation with all beings and thus with the divine essence.

In our breathing we are part of a common body. We are the human lungs of God. And this experience of the sacred is open to all and sundry. It is the one precious connecting lifeline we all share. It is our common bond. There is no Islamic or Jewish way of breathing. There is no religious or secular way of breathing. As far as I know there is no special Roman Catholic way of breathing. The winds that blow across the many playing fields of God are always utterly even.

Breathing and Stillness. . . For many reasons stillness is a lost grace. According to OFCOM, the UK's media regulator, the average Briton spends more than seven hours each day hooked on gadgetry. And in his *The Shallows*, Nicholas Carr mourns the loss of attention and contemplation in the wake of the mind-altering technology that has come into general use and is now becoming irresistible*. The ability to sit still, he holds, is a rare gift at a time when texting and surfing are playing havoc with our capacity for deep reflection. 'To be everywhere', wrote Seneca, 'is to be nowhere.' In *Silence and Stillness in Every Season* John Main reminds us about the silent awareness that gives our spirit room to be free, room to breathe, saying: 'in our modern world we easily forget that we have a divine origin, a divine source, and that this unifying incandescent energy of our own spirit emanates from the spirit of God.'

Breathing and stillness. Paradoxically, it is where the dancing happens. It is always reaching out to release a vibrant vitality in all things. 'We can make our minds so like still water', wrote W.B. Yeats, 'that beings gather about us so that they may see ... their own images, and so live for a moment with a clearer, perhaps even with a fiercer life because of our quiet.'

The great task that confronts each one of us is to discover within ourselves our own potential for creativity and unity, for reconciling in ourselves all that is splintered and separated, for allowing the original oneness of God to happen again within and around us. As it was for all great peacemakers, for Jesus and for all of us, the truly human heart is the divine catalyst of everything that has lost its place in God's original dream for the earth.

***IRRESISTIBLE: Why we Can't Stop Checking, Scrolling, Clicking and Watching.** By Adam Alter. (Bodley Head. 2017.)

(Unmasking God p115)