

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 8th September –

Families shine with God's redemptive presence

On reading Matthew 25 with new eyes, I wrote this as I hope Pope Francis would write it. But with the handicap of being a compulsorily celibate man, please forgive any ridiculous mistakes. But I do keep trying! A group of parents are gathered on Judgement Day and the Lord looks at them and says

'Come, you whom my Father has blessed - for I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me drink, naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me. Enter the kingdom I have prepared for you.'

And the parents will be bewildered and ask, 'Are you sure, Lord? When did we see you hungry and feed you?'

The Lord will reply, '

Do you really not know? Do you not remember the way you carefully fed me when I was a baby; the way you loved me into my first small steps across the kitchen into your arms, and later, my bigger steps into the waiting world. All the time that was me you were nourishing. Yes, of course it was your child. But it was me, your God, as well.'

'And when were you thirsty, Lord?' they anxiously asked.

'I needed you love and comfort. You held me to your breast and I could hear your heart. Gradually your patient voice and loving eyes opened my soul to the mystery of my own being. I, your God, became your vulnerable child so as to experience your great tenderness to me.'

But naked Lord? And homeless?'

The Lord replied,

'I was born naked and homeless, and you sheltered me, first in your womb and then in your arms. In my rebellious years I left home, blinded by lesser lights and loves. You did not judge me; your great heart never doubted me; you forgave me, you believed in me, you drew me into a higher way of life-making, light-making and love-making. No matter what, on my return home, your face at the door was always a smiling sacrament of welcome.'

An amazed parent blurted out, 'But imprisoned Lord! Surely not?'

The Lord paused.

'There are many kinds of prison. When I was imprisoned in my fears I cried out in the night; you came and lifted me from behind the bars of my cot and folded me in your arms. Years later you lifted me from behind the bars of bigger fears – fears of my own inadequacy, fears of my own intense emotions, fears of the terror and beauty of the unknown life ahead.'

Marriage and family life is the clearest expression of the Incarnation. In its fleshed reality and relationships it is the lived incarnation of the Blessed Trinity. The home is a cauldron of emotions, but to the eyes of faith, it is also the chalice of salvation. Yes, it is a scandal at times, but in spite of relentless sinning and shaming, we believe that hidden and buried within, it all shines with God's redemptive presence. And there is no exception. For all those reasons, the home is a powerhouse of renewal within the Church.