

## Daniel's reflection for week beginning 14th August God in the Scattered Fragments . .

Even if we wished we would be hard put to avoid the experience of God. The experience of God is practically inescapable. We cannot help coming into the embrace of divine compassion whenever we experience anything. Michael Skelley writes, 'We do not sometimes have experiences of love, fear, ourselves, or anything else and then also have experiences of God. The basic, original experience of God, on the contrary, is the ultimate depth and radical essence of every personal experience.' Until this is clearly understood it is very difficult to truly grasp the essential meaning of worship or liturgy or the celebration of the sacraments. Before the Sunday Eucharist can be a celebration of spiritual and joyful healing and empowerment for us, every human encounter must be seen as somehow an encounter with God.

The Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh finds God in the scattered fragments of each day. Probing into the commonplace, he contemplated the eternal. Writing about the loving mystery that is easily ignored or overlooked 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.

*Mysticism has to do with the search for the 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. What needs to be emphasised is that, on our part, a certain attuning and sensitising is necessary. We must work at this kind of vigilant awareness. De Chardin spoke of acquiring the 'skills' of perfecting the sacramental imagination. Beyond looking, even seeing, there is the graced gift of 'recognising'.*

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 something majestic, 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 as we recognise the absolute mystery. Most powerful of all, perhaps, is when we can discern the hand of God in the painful, restless and empty seasons of our decades on this earth. 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 hope, joy, peace, beauty, and goodness that we so often take for granted.

If we cannot see God in the ordinary events of life, Rahner holds, then we cannot expect that we will suddenly be able to see God when we gather for worship. To the extent that we have a heightened awareness of the absolute mystery in all the joys and sufferings of life, we will have little trouble in finding God in the liturgical assembly. Before worship can be an explicit experience of God, daily life must be an explicit experience of God. This theologian is convinced that we all carry a child-mystic within us; that mysticism, in its real meaning, is not as remote as we often assume; that Christians must become mystics who are attuned to the mysterious light that shines behind and through all that happens.