

The reflections for July are taken from longer articles Daniel wrote for this website over the years.

## Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 21st July –

### Horizons of the Heart

#### We are called into the deep by God's dream for us

Recently, I took a walk along the prom here at Blundellsands. The crisp dry evening brought families out, to stroll, fly kites and generally enjoy this beautiful Sunday, here was I, among my new neighbours. It felt good. However, as time went on, in the far distance, my attention was drawn to what seemed to be a stately vessel resting on the deeps, it was set against a backdrop of the faintest pastel hues at onset of sunset. As I paused to take in this sight, something vaguely familiar, within me stirred and a slow broad smile lit up my face as I affirmed with deep resonance, yes, we are called into the deep by God's dream for us. My recent move to Blundellsands has been the catalyst that brought about, yet again, such heartfelt knowing.

There are many ways of launching into the deep. There are moments in our lives when the yearning for radical change becomes especially intense. This insistent whisper may not be immediately recognised by everyone. But, given the divine source of our true essence, I suspect that it is always there. Something within us, maybe at the most unlikely times, and at our deepest and most hidden levels, keeps convincing us and often with a relentless urgency, of distant but reachable horizons.

I'm a Capricorn. On my wall is a picture of a determined looking goat midway through a huge leap across a terrifying chasm. As I was completing my recent move to my present home, I paused before it every day, because that is where I found myself during those months of my life – looking for a place to land. At the point of the launching out into the unknown, to another way of ministering as a priest, the secret was not in looking downwards or backwards, or losing heart.

In the transitions of our lives, there is a fatal attraction to the void below. There is such a safety about the familiar routines that they can provide us with a false identity. It is unavoidable, then, in our pursuit of authenticity, that our ego should spread anxious panic. But the felt fear only testifies to the risk we are taking and the courage we are embracing. We will always be tempted to doubt, to look down, and to look back. There have been times in all the crossing-places of my own life when I battled with the cautioning tapes of parents, teachers and priests still turning in my head. It was then that I wanted to return to the safety of the status quo, to retrace my steps back down along the slow paths of my recent ascent, where the embers of the previous evenings' camp-fires were still warm. When I listen to the hidden dreams of ordinary, healthy people I often wonder whether this persistent compulsion for greater and finer things burns in every human heart. All kinds of counter-attractions – loss of nerve, negative judgements and jealous comments – can numb out and dampen down that first God-given spark that is always waiting to be fanned into a fiercer flame. But that spark, I believe, can never be extinguished. God's imagination is incarnate within us. It is not easily overcome. 'Creative minds have always been known to survive any kind of bad training,' wrote Anna Freud. The anthropologist Mary Daly reminds us that the creative potential itself in human beings is the enfleshed restlessness of the deity. It is important to believe that we all carry within our bodies and hearts God's own dissatisfaction with the closed, lukewarm and safe ways of living. The whole thrust of every moment of Jesus' life was towards a passion for the possible.

I have come to believe that when we struggle to discern the pros and cons of making a leap into the unknown, there is a sense in which some part of us has made the move already. Something, in fact, has already happened upfront at the boundaries of our life where the burning is brightest. A part of us has already crossed over into that as yet unknown space. It is waiting for the other parts of us to catch up. 'You must give birth to your images,' wrote the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, 'They are the future waiting to be born. Fear not the strangeness you feel. The future must enter into you long before it happens.' We have always carried the vague shape of a potential destiny somewhere within us – in our memory, in the unconscious, touched on in some of our more profound experiences

Is there, I wonder, something of immense importance hidden in the least of the aspirations of our lives? Antonio Machado, the Spanish poet, wrote, 'Anyone who moves onwards, even a little, Walks, like Jesus, on the water.' Yet my own experience of walking on water resembles more the embarrassing misfortune of Peter than the quiet elegance of Jesus. To step out of the boat of our secure lives on to a precarious surface that may not hold our weight is a very foolhardy thing to do. Crossing a new terrain, to do a new work, is never a safe option. But once you begin to know yourself, to feel the shape of your soul, to have one courageous conversation with your true essence, then you have no choice. We are divinely created for growth; fashioned from the very beginning to become like God. That is why, to have heard the whisper of that call coming to you, is already to have answered.