

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 16th September -The Catholic-Christian Faith – told as a Love Story Some implications of Incarnation

When seen through the lens of a theology of nature and grace (last week) the love, meaning and implications of Incarnation will be very different to what many of us were taught in the past. Once we believe that the very essence of God's being is made visible and tangible in all Creation, then we are shaken by the astonishing secret that everybody and everything are the vibrant presence of incarnate divinity. Incarnation, as we noted, did not really add something to Creation as though some dimension of the original plan was missing or sabotaged by the Adam and Eve myth. What Incarnation revealed was the depth and profundity of the whole unfolding evolution from the beginning of Creation. It revealed the design and flow of the original seed of God's first Incarnation billions of years ago, that has within it everything needed to blossom into that final Omega. It revealed the infinite love that erupted into the first Creation and that sustains, nourishes and guides the evolving work of the Holy Spirit in the long journey into its future completion. We begin to see the wholeness, integrity and coherence of the Christian Story of Life. There were no ultimate breakdowns, original 'falls', divine banishments and punishments, expulsions from gardens, and angry outbursts from a disappointed God. These belong to the realms of myth, not to history. And in that deadly confusion of myth and history lay the germ of the future demise of the Christian Churches that we are currently experiencing. Hopefully, and recently, and in the nick of time, this delightful and newly recovered theology of Creation is gradually restoring the divine and human love-story that has been lost along the way, and for which the world is yet again waiting. A true understanding of Incarnation is healing the hurt, draining away the poison. Now we are encouraged to trust again in God's unconditional love – a God who no longer lives 'out there' but 'in here' in the centre of our hearts, in the hearts of our families, our communities, our cultures. This extravagantly-loving God is the power and energy within our fields and seasons, our land and sky, the burning core of our turning worlds.

We call on our artists and visionaries, our poets and mystics, our scientists and theologians to express for us what this incarnate beauty is like. We look carefully around us and begin to notice the shape and surprise of God in just about everything. We look carefully within us and hear the divine breath in ours, the divine heartbeat in ours, the divine presence in ours, the divine love in all our relationships hidden in the nooks and crannies of our lives. Free of all diabolical rumours of God's anger and disappointment over original sin at the very beginning, we can now launch ourselves without fear into the everlasting arms. We now know that God is the very energy of us, the creativity, imagination and life of us, utterly at home at our deepest depth. Riddled with dualism, our churches have missed the most amazing, even shocking revelation inherent in the implications of Incarnation.

When we love, for instance, it is God loving; when we forgive, it is God's forgiveness too. The more human we are the more divine we are. Never doubt this. There is no division any more between being human and being divine, between 'ordinary' life and the 'sacred' life, between heaven and earth, between God and us. The love between spouses is divine love tangible and sensual. In his Theology of the Body Pope St John Paul II writes of the body as 'the image of God, incarnate in the visible and corporeal fact of the masculinity or femininity of the human person . . . The experience of communion between man and woman is more like the inner life of God than anything else we encounter in creation.' Likewise, the love of a mother for her baby is our Mother-God's own incarnate love. The love of a farmer for the fields and the harvest is God's own longing, too. The smallest act of compassion, or patience, or service or sacrifice is another Incarnation revealing the beautiful face of God in disguise. Elsewhere we have expanded on these everyday implications of Incarnation that, like windows of wonder, bless and deepen our experiences of the abundant life. Scientist and theologian Franciscan Sr Ilia Delio writes, 'To see the universe through the eyes of love helps us make sense of evolution, not as a process of blind chance or randomness, but one of passion, yearning, novelty, union, gift, suffering, death and new life . . . The name 'God' points to this mystery of love in its unlimited depth, the centre of all that is.'

(From one of Fr. Daniel's unpublished papers 2018)