

## Daniel's reflection for week beginning February 12th – In Praise of Praise When I affirm you, I, too Grow

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I don't like fog. It shuts out the light. Last week we had an old-fashioned pea-souper around our town when you could hardly see your hand. I got lost driving home from my brother's parish in Manchester. I hate getting lost and I'm always doing it. 'But how,' you might ask, 'could anyone get lost on that straight –forward journey? There's a huge sign for the M1North off the M62. You'd have to be a special kind of idiot to miss that!' Yet I did. God help me, I did. I drove up to the presbytery feeling really sorry for myself. Still fearful since my recent break-in, as I turned the key I thought, 'What a glorious night for burglars.' . . These were my dark thoughts as I got ready for bed.

The phone rang. An old friend, 'How are you Daniel?'. 'Never better,' I lied. But soon I told her the truth about feeling down and miserable. My friend gently reminded me of some of the good things that I had recently done, some positive comments she had heard about me, and that she believed in me and valued our friendship. On hearing such affirmation and encouragement I immediately picked up. The fog seemed to lift, at least from my heart. I thought about the power of genuine praise. It can heal our souls and renew our self-esteem. It can bring us hope. It can enable us to live in the dawn even while it is still dark; to trust the light even in the dark fog. The words of a song, given to me by my mother many decades ago, came back to my mind. "If with pleasure you are viewing any work that I am doing; If you like me or you love me, tell me now. Don't withhold your affirmation till the preacher makes oration and I lie with snowy lilies o'er my brow. If I earn your praise bestow it; if you dig me let me know it, let the words of true encouragement be said. Do not wait till life is over and I'm underneath the clover for I cannot read my tombstone when I'm dead."

We often need reminding about the Celtic belief that everything we send out comes back threefold. When we think or talk in a mean way, our souls shrivel. When we curse someone, the curse returns to damage ourselves. And when we praise, our own hearts swell with a healthy self-esteem. There is no thought, word or act of generosity that does not, sooner or later, enrich the giver. It is a well-kept secret.

*(Prism of Love pp19,20)*