

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 26th August -The Catholic-Christian Faith – told as a Love Story Incarnation: A New Evolutionary Threshold

That is the title of one of Fr Diarmuid O'Murchu's latest books in which he offers a radical redefinition of the notion of Incarnation. He sees Incarnation as marking a key step in the unfolding evolution of God's Creation. It points the way to the fulfilment of our destiny. We can continue in that direction – or not bother, and so destroy ourselves and our planet. While the birth of Jesus is the core of the Christian faith, Incarnation is not restricted to the Christian context alone. Rather, he holds, Incarnation names and reveals the embodiment of God in the whole creation, celebrating what God creates throughout the 13.7 billion years of evolution. These enlarged horizons do not undermine belief in a personal God, nor the intimacy of the divine-human relationship. This new exploration of faith requires a new language, a new consciousness, a new and courageous beginning. We wait for our leaders to turn their attention to this urgent need. And our hearts break when this does not seem to be happening. And from now on it will only ever happen when all the religions and open cultures of the world are sharing their own Spirit-filled wisdom. Any one community can no longer manage this soul-sized, cosmic-sized evolutionary breakthrough on its own.

The author views the incarnational presence of God in all the embodied forms that constitute the web of life, from the cosmic to the bacterial, from the micro to the macro. The first Incarnation was when God initially gave birth to the body of the universe at the primal Flaring Forth, long before the evolution of primitive forms of life led to the breakthrough into humanity with its self-awareness and interiority, and then into Incarnation in Jesus. Within this expanding understanding of Incarnation there is the divine longing for, and human awareness, of a unity, a totality, an integrity and completeness that transcends all our inherited dualisms of earth v heaven, body v soul, matter v spirit, secular v sacred, human v divine.

We cannot love God without at the same time loving God's creation. We cannot grasp the urgings of the Holy Spirit of Life in the human heart without acknowledging the energising, empowering source of the loving Mystery of everything in God's creation. Nor can we celebrate Church liturgy without first celebrating the liturgy of life. God's revelation lies in the one-ness of all Creation and its evolving processes. Divine presence is revealed primarily in all that facilitates growing and flourishing – in every aspect of God's creation – even in the least speck of dust, as Pope Francis put it. (*Laudato Si'* 9)

Traditional Catholic-Christian theology has always insisted that there is more to the Christian faith than what concerns humans alone. Incarnation is not just about humanity but also about the planetary and cosmic contexts in which humans evolve, grow and develop. Long before we humanoids came on the scene as a new earthly species, holiness flourished. God's revelation to us, God's presence with us, and the divine incarnational intimacy in us, belongs, first and foremost, to Creation itself, straight from the womb of God. Our perceptual horizon of our faith has been too fearful, too narrow, too suffocating. The time has come to explore its enlarged horizons.

Daniel

(From one of Fr Daniel's unpublished articles 2017/Spring 2018)