

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 2nd December –

I hope you did not find our last few Weekly Reflections too difficult. We have spent decades exploring the personal transformation that happens when we apply the implications of Incarnation to our personal lives and loves. But without embracing the whole achievement and mystery of Creation and Evolution like we are trying to do, we will never understand the full wonder and graced magic of a fleshed God. So please have another go at making all this work and play central to your life. 'If we do not try to understand Creation and Evolution in its beauty, if we do not 'get it right,' as St Thomas Aquinas said, 'then we will never understand God.' The Energy called God: the Evolution called the Holy Spirit is an unpublished paper of mine, offered in six parts .Part 6 this week.(Spring 2018.) *Daniel O'Leary*

6.Incarnation will always be our Compass; Christ always at the Centre

Creation is clearly the first revelation of God. 'Ever since God created the world, his everlasting power and deity have been there for the mind to see in the things that he has made.' (Rom1:20) In his Summa Theologica Thomas Aquinas wrote 'God produces man and diverse creatures so that what was lacking in one in representation of this great divine goodness might be supplied by another. The whole universe together participates in the divine goodness and represents it better than any single creature could by itself.' Once you recognise the divine goodness in one creature, 'pretty soon,' says Richard Rohr, 'it universalises and you recognise the Presence in all creatures.'

In our search for guidelines we turn again to the glimpses provided by the pivotal moment of Incarnation and to a renewed Christology. Christ needs to be seen as more than the one historical God-man who worked many miracles, who died for our sins to save us all, and was afterwards raised to glory. He was, of course, all of those things, but much more. Christ, the scriptures tell us, is also someone and something within the very structure of the cosmos itself, the pattern on which the universe was conceived, is built and is now developing.

In the Letter to the Colossians we read, 'Christ is the firstborn of all creation. For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created . . . all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.' Reflection on these words opens new casements on to the mysteries we are now exploring. Our imagination is profoundly challenged. We are urged to transcend many of the categories of our thinking up to now. St Paul is indicating that Christ lies not just at the root of spirituality and morality but at the base of physics, biology and cosmology as well. What does this mean?

Again, Fr Ronald Rolheiser offers a wonderful perspective. He explains that the spiritual and the material, the moral and the physical, the mystical and the hormonal, the religious and the pagan do not oppose each other but are part of the one thing, one pattern, all infused by one and the same spirit, all drawn to the same end, with the same goodness, love and meaning at their centre. Simply put, he holds that 'the same force is responsible both for the law of gravity and the Sermon on the Mount, and both are binding for the same reason'. Dylan Thomas must have been pondering along similar lines when he wrote , 'the force that though the green fuse drives the flower drives my green age . . .' It is also, we might add, a description of grace.

When Rolheiser writes that everything is ultimately the unfolding of creation as initially made in the image of Christ, thus revealing the face of the invisible God, he excludes nothing – 'the universe itself hurtling through space, the blind attraction of atoms for each other, the relentless push for growth in a plant, the instinctual

hunt for blood by a mosquito, the automatic impulse of a baby to put everything into her mouth, the erotic charge inside the body of an adolescent, the fierce protectiveness of a young mother, the obsession to create inside an artist, or the genuflection in prayer'. The fact that Christ is cosmic, and that nature is shaped in his likeness, means that God's heart now beats in everything that lives.

If Christ is also the pattern according to which the universe is unfolding, then what's inside of God, according to Rolheiser, is also somehow manifest in 'the raw energy, colour and beauty of the physical, be that the beauty of a symphony or a sunset, which we can more easily acknowledge as religious, or be it the more morally ambivalent, but undeniable beauty that is manifest in the body of a movie star, the voice of a pop singer, or the colourful and lively energy that bubbles inside the culture. Clear or ambivalent, everything reflects the same pattern'.

The fundamental laws of the universe and the fundamental principles of Incarnation are drawn inexorably from the same source to the same horizon. Christ is bigger than the historical churches, his place in history is within and beyond historical Christianity, and his influence is felt before the Big Bang and still will be when human history is done. Rolheiser continues to stretch our imagination so that our faith will keep developing, our images of God will keep fresh and empowering, our capacity for mystery increase, and our desire for eternal union will intensify. 'It is Christ, visible and invisible – the person, the power, the mystery – who is drawing all things, physical and spiritual, natural and religious, non-Christian and Christian, into one'.