

## Daniel's reflection for week-beginning 1st October - Jesus, The Human One Sacrament Of God

The seeds of a theology of nature and grace were sown on the first Pentecost Sunday. The gifts of the Holy Spirit were already expanding in the hearts of the disciples with a new understanding of the meaning of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. Above all what was gripping their imagination was the fact that it was in his humanity that he achieved what he had to achieve. The transformation of their lives was brought about by the truth of their friendship with this ordinary, extraordinary man. At a high level of intimacy-because, in a sense, their very lives were at stake- they shared their deepest doubts, hopes, fears and expectations with the new and very human friend. They were called, forgiven, and captivated by him. Their world was turned around by him. And at the end of it all, after the terrible trauma of his death, and the confused experiences of his resurrection, something amazing began to dawn on them. To know him, they now realised, was to know God. To walk, in love, with him was to walk, in love, with God. In the company of Jesus they had confided in, touched and embraced God-made-flesh. That is why theologian Edward Schillebeeckx called Jesus "the primordial sacrament of the encounter with God ".

The spirit of Pentecost inspired them to grasp the fact that what was true of Jesus was true of everyone. God was now, incredibly, as accessible as any true human encounter. Jesus first, and then the church, became the sacrament of universal salvation. This is something we must learn in a new way. In solidarity with Jesus, everyone is a sacrament of God. Because every detail of Jesus' humanity shone out with divine grace, so it is with us. Because Jesus, to be truly human, would have to have experienced all human emotion, then all human emotion is potentially revelatory of God. Put another way, it was God's desire that the divine essence and splendour should be fully revealed in the finite, real humanity of a man called Jesus-Jesus, the human one. . . . He is, in his humanity, the message he brings. Jesus does not merely utter words about God; he himself is the uttered word. The humanity of Jesus is the summit and reality of the yearnings of both creation and of God. Every moment of his life was an invitation to his disciples, and to us, to become more completely human. Always open to love, he himself never compromised. To discover what humanity ought to be, what it can be, the Christian looks at Jesus because he reveals, and indeed is, both the very fullness of creative being, and of God-become-human. His is the humanity against which we all measure the truth of our lives. That all of us, like him, already God's children, may become even more God-like, is the purpose of life. (1Jn3:2)

(Begin with the Heart pages 77-78)