

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 27th May – Everything on Earth is Kissed by God

‘Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection ... Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God’s infinite wisdom and goodness. We must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature so as to avoid a disordered use of things’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church). [Laudato Si 69] ‘

[In] God’s loving plan,’ writes Pope Francis, ‘every creature has its own value and significance. In our time the Church does not simply state that other creatures are completely subordinated to the good of human beings, as if they have no worth in themselves, and can be treated as we wish.’ And again, ‘Even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of God’s love.’ Not every aspect of evolution reaches towards fulfilment in human beings. Creation has many goals within its unfolding. Humanity is one of them. This is emphasised by Pope Francis to clarify the reasons for our ‘environmental conversion’. So it may not just be a matter of ‘respecting the original goodness of every creature’, but of acknowledging their wisdom and their grace of natural worship. Theologian Elizabeth Johnson took the title for her wonderful book *Ask the Beasts* from the Hebrew scriptures:

If you would learn more, ask the cattle;
Seek information from the birds of the air.
The creeping things of earth will give you lessons,
And the fishes of the seas will tell you all.
There is not a single creature that does not know
That everything is of God’s making.
God holds in power the soul of every living thing,
And the breath of every human body. (Job 12:7–10)

Jesus commands that the gospel be preached ‘to all Creation’. The Pope quotes St Francis about preaching to the birds ‘just as if they were endowed with reason’. And in some sense they are, for each of them is indwelt with infinite intimacy by the Logos, who is ‘the risen Christ who embraces and illuminates all things’. Many are surprised to realise that divine redemption stretches out beyond the salvation of individual, separate souls. ‘All creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival which is God.’ It means that all our sisters and brothers in nature belong with us in the family of our Divine Parent.

The theology of Creation in *Laudato Si* is in profound continuity with that which underpins *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) and *Misericordiae Vultus* (2016) – about the immeasurable abundance of God’s mercy. ‘Not one sparrow is forgotten before God’. But we have forgotten. The environmental theologian Carmody Grey reminds us that Dostoyevsky believed that we should ask forgiveness of the birds; and Isaac the Syrian urged us to pray for reptiles. How much more should we pray for all creatures, on whom we depend, and we on whom they, in turn, depend for their salvation here? Julian of Norwich believed that, because they are sustained by God’s love in this life, they will live on in that love in heaven too. Who will help us with liturgies of light and depth to interiorise, identify with and celebrate these truths?

(Astonishing Secret p71-72)