

Daniel's reflection for week-beginning 15th October - Know Yourself Well

Because we are all wonderfully designed by God, so carefully and lovingly put together, we have astonishing capacities to influence and transform each other at profound levels of our living. It is like a vibrant network of mutual interconnectedness, a flow of energy and inner power that began in creation and was revealed and personified in Jesus at the incarnation. A theology of nature and grace concerns itself with graced experiences in the unfolding of our humanity and of creation itself, an unfolding that is the continuing fleshing out in time and space of the implications of the once-for-all moment when God became human.

There is something intensely personal about the interchange that happens in sharing the good news. It is as though Jesus was revealing something of his own self every time he explains things to those around him. Heart spoke to heart whenever they gathered to search for the Father's love and meaning in the gifts of their lives. In other words we can only really be present to someone else to the same extent as we are present to ourselves. We can only understand another to the same extent as we understand ourselves. We can only walk the Emmaus journey with others to the extent that we have walked it within our own hearts. It is only when we have travelled the twists and turns of the labyrinth of our own holy mystery that we can be a grace for another. . . It is only to the extent that any of us know ourselves, that we can begin to glimpse anything of God. It is well to remember the *noverim me, noverim te* of Saint Augustine. 'I seek to know myself, oh Lord, so that I may know thee all the more'. . . This is not about the need to be perfect; it is about the need to be aware of our inner dividedness, of our fears and shadows, of the unfamiliar terrain of our own complex interiority. The hidden self is notoriously shy of the light.

Jesus revealed that true ministry is found only in the individual and community that can accept their own vulnerability. We all find that a hard thing to do; and so does the institutional church itself. We have no choice about this principle. It is the way of incarnation.

'What the world and the Church needs today', to quote Pope John Paul II, 'are heralds of the Gospel who are experts in humanity, who know the depth of the human heart, who can share the joys, hopes, agonies and distress of people today, and who are, at the same time, contemplatives who have fallen in love with God.

Without such "expertise"; especially around the fundamental wounded-ness at the heart of our lives, there will be something vital missing in our attempts to spread the Good News of salvation. That vulnerability, in fact, is the essential aspect of our humanity that God needed in Jesus, and now needs in us, to make the divine gift of power in our powerlessness tangible and visible to a suffering world

(Begin with the Heart pp 128 -130)