

This reflection is an extract from Episode 1 of 'An Astonishing Secret – The Love Story of Creation and the Wonder of You' video course. Please read as if being spoken.

Daniel's reflection for week beginning 3rd January-

Let's start with Creation (*expansive thoughts for the start of a new year!*)

Your life will change when you begin to believe that God is not 'out there' anymore, that God is the unconditional love that lives intimately within your heart, and in the heart of the world.

Your deepest and true self somehow already knows the astonishing secret that will now be gradually revealed. Be prepared to let go of the fearful, doctrinal teaching that many of us grew up with.

A whole new panorama of love, of happiness, of wonder will begin to open up within you, and around you.

And it is all truly traditional in the best sense of that word.

There was a time not so long ago that we believed our planet was the centre of the universe and that the moon and the stars went around it to keep us warm and give us light. And now we know, of course, it's a very different story. Our little planet is like a grain of sand along the seashores of the universe. Every week it seems we learn more and more about this planet as scientists have a field day with technology. We know we belong to a galaxy called the Milky Way, moreover there arguably billions of galaxies, with billions and trillions of planets. That gives us some idea how incredibly expansive the whole of creation is, and we also know that the whole of creation is expanding at a speed of light for the last 14 billion years. When we bring Good into it, the God we believe in, the God of Jesus, the God of the Christians, when we believe that God is the very creator, the mother of all of this, how astonishing is this! It isn't just God creating the universe from a distance. God's own self is now revealed as the universe.

When we say what we've just said that God's first acquaintance with the world wasn't just 2000 years ago when we celebrate the incarnation of Christ, but it was nearly 14 billion years ago with that first incarnation in creation, it's quite mind-boggling. But God has been deeply and intimately involved with the evolution from the beginning and the whole story is somehow completed, guaranteed and confirmed in the incarnation of God in Jesus. And now we as Christians believe it! Pope Francis even talks about God in a speck of dust! That's why our saints call creation the first bible. We are creatures of that long history. We are children of God and we are God's own self in the flesh. Everything and everybody is a child of God. How can we bring that realisation into our daily lives in the deepest way? If we ponder this more deeply, it will affect our faith, our prayer, our worship and our celebration of the sacraments.

This whole course is an effort to reclaim that wonderful spirituality of Creation, of nature and grace, of God is beauty hidden within what happens to us every day. Pope Francis spoke about having a big heart open to God. That's what it is for us – to be open to the mystery of God, the mystery of the Holy Spirit, way beyond anything we can imagine but we do try to imagine as much as we can so as to experience that freedom of God's children and to deepen our delight in being Christian

Because this new understanding of Creation, we can talk about the divine beauty of our human heart. Every time we breathe, every time our heart beats, this is about the closeness and intimacy

of God with us. When we truly reflect on this it can't but affect us! It's like when someone falls in love, when we love someone or we feel loved, the *experience* of that. Faith is not about knowing and remembering more and more doctrine and dogma. It is about the whole surrender of our hearts to what love is.

I don't think God is interested in doctrines and dogma but is more interested in the state of our hearts. I think it's more about the softening of our hearts our trusting, our surrendering and letting go and letting the Holy Spirit fill us, nourishes and be the centre of our lives. What's important is that we deepen what we already know that we learn to love better, that we forgive with more grace.

(An Astonishing Secret video course can be accessed at <https://astonishingsecret.org>

A DVD set of the video course can be obtained from Pauline Books and Media
<https://www.paulineuk.org/browse/dvds/item/astonishing-secret/5031446770610>)

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