

Daniel's reflection for week beginning March 5th – Live in the present

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Our true home is in the present moment.

To live in the present moment is a miracle.

The miracle is not to walk on water

the miracle is to walk on the green

Earth in the present moment.

These words by Thich Nhat Hanh about returning to the present moment from wherever you have strayed, is our theme for today, a theme that is spread throughout the theologies, mysticism and wisdom of the great world religions. As well as everything else, it makes good sense. It is extraordinary how much time we spend worrying over future possibilities or regretting things from our past lives. We waste huge amounts of precious energy over useless anxiety. No wonder we feel drained and tired so often. This reflection is another reminder about coming to your senses, literally – to what you are currently seeing, hearing and touching.

This is the safest and surest place to be. No one can harm you if you abide in the here and now. It is also the only meeting-place between you and the God called I am; the only moment of encounter between our spirits and the Spirit of all life. It is uniquely in the here and now that the pen-point of God's love writes on the page of our humanity, as the divine drama of the incarnation unfolds.

It is only from the vantage-point of the naked 'now' that we can discern the countryside through which we are travelling. It is, in fact, the time for literally taking a 'breather' with deep breaths, for letting the shoulders sag, for stopping the desperate pushing and relentless demanding with which we drive our fragile bodies.

'Stay here,' advises Rumi, the medieval Persian prophet, 'quivering with each moment, like a drop of mercury.' And quite miraculously, once we actually stop the urgent and intense doing, it is as though we are healed automatically by grace itself; without actually 'doing' anything, we swiftly regain a refreshing balance that provides a new energy to continue the journey. Many times a day, especially when I'm drawn to anxiety or doubt, I fall back on this gospel counsel. Because this blessed ability to stay in the present through the grace of trusting and letting go, it has an immediate effect on body and soul. Whenever I'm asked to sum up, in a sentence, what 'works for me,' I tend to repeat that last sentence.

Such unconditional surrender to God's will as revealed in each passing second requires immense trust. Yesterday, when the sun shone and my spirits were high, I found myself trying to lock into that moment and preserve it forever. That is not the way to live in the present, where we take it on trust that the future can be safely left in God's tender hands. We know well that we are incapable of faith like that, but once we risk pushing out the boat, the wind of the Spirit blows with unexpected intensity. For now, if you are not already familiar with this belief and practice, I encourage you to reflect on it. The present moment is the only truth. It is where everything good happens. It is free of the memories and fears that keep blotting the sun from our lives. Our guardian angels guard it safely. But we must find it. It takes vigilance and costs not less than everything.