

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 18th November –

I hope you did not find our last few Weekly Reflections too difficult. We have spent decades exploring the personal transformation that happens when we apply the implications of Incarnation to our personal lives and loves. But without embracing the whole achievement and mystery of Creation and Evolution like we are trying to do, we will never understand the full wonder and graced magic of a fleshed God. So please have another go at making all this work and play central to your life. 'If we do not try to understand Creation and Evolution in its beauty, if we do not 'get it right,' as St Thomas Aquinas said, 'then we will never understand God.' The Energy called God: the Evolution called the Holy Spirit is an unpublished paper of mine, offered in six parts. Part 4 this week. (Spring 2018.) *Daniel O'Leary*

4. A Marriage made in Heaven

Scientist Guy Consolmagno SJ, curator of meteorites at the Vatican Observatory, throws a deep and lovely light on our struggles to understand the questions I'm raising in these Reflections. These questions and suggestions concern the marriage between our faith and the revelations of science, between religion and cosmology (ie the origins of the universe). He suggests that we rephrase the beginning of John's Gospel to gain a transforming insight into this most alluring mystery. He substitutes the 'essence of life' for 'the Word' at the beginning of John's Gospel. 'In the beginning was the fundamental rational basis of the universe . . .' he writes. Referring to the perceived conflict between science and religion, he then asks, 'How could God be at war with himself?' Full of wonder he insists, 'The laws of the universe became a baby. How can the laws of science become a human being?' In those words this scholar-scientist puts our mind at rest regarding many of the above questions and meditations.

And again, speaking on the feast of Epiphany (2009) Pope Benedict evoked Dante and Galileo to show that 'divine love, incarnated in Christ' was the 'fundamental and universal law of creation'. This remark finds its place at the heart of our current Reflections. It sees all that is happening by way of the evolution and sustenance of life, of our world, of technology, of genetics, of our minds, of our growth in compassion, of our self-consciousness as being the *vestigia Dei* – the footprints, fingerprints and heart-prints of God's own essence (St Bonaventure).

Approaching the mystery of Incarnation and Resurrection in another way, Fr Ronald Rolheiser holds 'that there is a deep moral structure to the universe, that the contours of the universe are love and goodness and truth, and that this structure, anchored at its centre by ultimate love and power, is non-negotiable . . . God uses only love, truth, beauty and goodness by structurally embedding them into the universe itself, like a giant moral immune system that eventually, always, brings the body back to health.'

And in yet another angle on the same debate, Fr John O'Donohue writes, 'The good news comes from the very well of life itself. This is the news that life itself is the primal sacrament; that life itself is the home of the eternal; that at death, life is not ended but transfigured since we are never outside, but always within, God.' In a memorable phrase about the ultimate reason for human existence, St Thomas Aquinas wrote, 'God is sheer joy, and sheer joy demands company.'

Thomas Merton adds his insight to our search. He throws another light on the meaning of life as in the spiritual life. 'The inner self,' he writes, 'is not a part of our being, like a motor in a car. It is our entire substantial reality itself, on its highest and most personal and most existential level. It is like life, and it is life. It is the life by which everything else in us lives and moves. It is in and through and beyond everything that we are. If it is awakened it communicates a new life to the intelligence in which it lives, so that it becomes a living awareness of itself; and this awareness is not so much something that we ourselves have, as something that we are. It is a new and indefinable quality of our living being.' George Coyne SJ writes that 'God, in his infinite freedom continuously creates a world that reflects that freedom at all levels of the evolutionary process to greater and greater complexity. God lets the world be what it will be in continuous evolution. He is not continually intervening, but rather allows, participates, loves.' Does your heart lurch a little when you read these astonishing possibilities – indeed these non-negotiable Christian truths.