

Daniel's reflection for week beginning 8th January The Mystical Call to Journey Forth

Life's best teachers warn us against staying on the circumference of our lives too long, or we will never know either ourselves or God. They remind us that we all have a mystical call to journey forth and undergo great testing in order to save our soul, and save the world. That, too, is the vision of Jesus. It must not get lost in ecclesiastical translation. When we set out to begin again, spiritual forces that we cannot even imagine are unleashed both to support us and to frighten us. Because this enterprise isn't just a head-journey alone; nor is it the pursuit of perfect external behaviour. It is much more. It is what Christians call metanoia – a going beyond the mind, a reconnecting with the divine, a confrontation with our demons of doubt.

That is why Carl Jung taught that it requires patience, determination and boldness. It is a deliberate embracing of the darkness, of what he termed 'the night sea journey' and this is an act of the purest courage. Theologian Martin Buber said: 'all spiritual journeys have a hidden destination of which the traveller is unaware.' Humble before mystery, R. S. Thomas agrees:

I think that maybe

I will be a little surer

of being a little nearer.

That's all. Eternity

is in the understanding

that that little is more than enough.

Given our congenital facility for getting lost, Buber believed we need teachers to negotiate the journey of the soul. These guides will come in all kinds of disguises, at the most propitious moments. There is 'the teacher within' as St Augustine reminded us, there is the anamchara (soul-mate) beside us, and there is the guardian angel above us. And all are the manifestations of the gracious mystery so utterly in love with us.

Too many die with their minds still shackled by a blinding, compulsive uniformity. Liberated thinking can transform the world. When you change the way you look at life, the life you are looking at will change too. 'Let a man in a garret but burn with enough intensity', de Saint Exupéry wrote, 'and he will set fire to the world.'

In January millions are ready for a radical shift in their lives and in their thinking. The start of every year calls for a moment of stillness. This moment will reveal the possibilities waiting painfully to emerge from the soil of our soul

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