

Ninth Set of Reflections - Disclosure Moment

As I drove through the midday streets of our little town here in Garforth this brisk February day, I was struck quite strongly by a vision of where the imminent God was really and fundamentally present. . .

I parked my car and went to Medicare chemist shop around the corner. I had a prescription for my nose. I have difficulty with my breathing. While waiting in the queue I had time to revisit and continue that moment of disclosure about my awakened and startlingly clear sense of God at work and at play in all that was happening around me. There was a man who looked very pale and ill, shuffling around with no light in his eyes. There was Mary, whom I knew and greeted, waiting for her phials of insulin to keep the life flowing in her. A father, off work for the day, or maybe out-of-work for longer, was holding the hand of his daughter whose eyes were red and swollen from some painful looking infection. Again, I became so strongly aware of a deeper mystery at hand, of a rumour of angels around the place, of a stunning fabric and texture to what, at first glance seemed so mundane and commonplace. The drugs, the tablets, the medicine were all from the store-house of nature. I thought of the Celtic belief that God places somewhere in creation a cure for all the ills of life. And the people were serving each other. Talking to each other, comparing notes with each other, consoling each other.

I had never noticed it before but the place, it seemed to me at that moment, was full of grace. There was no need for conversion here: no need for redirection of human nature; no need for a call to repentance from sinful ways. This is where God is happening, I thought. This is where the most fundamental and real presence of the divine is to be found. I could see St. Mary's Church of England church through the window of the pharmacy. What the churches do, I realised, is to affirm the incredible holiness of this queue of people, to confirm the deepest mystery of an everyday line of needy citizens, waiting, sometimes patiently, sometimes not, for their name to be called to the counter, to be given the white packet containing the insulin, or the tablets, or the pain-reducing medicine.

In the same breath and at the same time, did I hear another voice surrounding the attendant's voice, calling the same name but at a deeper level? When Mary the diabetic desperately searches for help and healing, did I think of an answering grace in a white packet called insulin that guarantees Mary's quality of life? When the little girl longs for her inflamed eyes to be cured, did I think of Bartimaeus pleading for his sight back, and wonder whether what Jesus did then in one way, he is doing now in this very shop in another?

And the pale man with no light in his eyes – what about him? He is given the tonic to redden his blood and lighten his step and straighten his back and shoulders. His lost zest for living is restored to him. He will soon bring a new presence and joy to his family. What else is this but divine grace?

(Lost Soul pp 42,43)