

### Ninth Set of Reflections - Sacraments of what happens

In the early Christian era the experience of the Spirit of the Risen Christ was vivid and immediate and far less structured than it later became. Men and women presented the evidence for the continued presence of Christ, not so much in the formulations of a structured church as in the quality of their own lives. In the joys and hopes of constant daily struggle, they built a community of love and trust. 'By this we know that we have passed from death to life, by the love we have for each other.' (1Jn 3:14)

And commenting on this, St Augustine added that the love with which we love each other is the same love with which God loves us. Culminating in the second Vatican Council, the emphasis began to move from predominantly institutional understanding of the church to a more vulnerable, experience-based and people-centred community of the baptised. This shift in emphasis arose from the changing perception of the relationship between the church and the world. The recovery of a theology of creation plays a huge part in this changing perception.

The world is a graced arena in which human beings strive always to become more and more truly human. It is the history within which God became incarnate, and established forever its essential value. In Christ, God accepted the world definitively, so that everything in it was shown to be decisive for the salvation of creation. Nevertheless, the decisive nature of the created world must be actualised by human beings themselves in the process of history. All activities – discoveries, inventions, technology, artistic creativity – needs to be positively directed towards deeper humanisation, for through incarnation the world's welfare has become our dearest responsibility. (Lost Soul p46)