

## Week Beginning 31st March: On Being Good Enough

In my pastoral experience a common cry from those seeking a fuller life concerns the inbuilt sense of inferiority and the fear of being judged. That is why we pretend; tell lies; it is why we try to impress in a thousand ways; it lies at the heart of our untold misery and even tragedy. Whether in the least competitive of small communities, or at the heady heights of political or religious power, you will find the silent fear of failure, the watchful tensions at the precarious edge of peer-comparison . . .

It is the fear-driven ego that makes us strive too hard – to give more than we are capable of because we do not believe that even our best is ever ‘good enough’. We can too easily get in the way of the flow and dance of life when we try too hard. But we do not have to do it at all. We keep forgetting that there is an undercurrent of divinity in our lives that shapes, guides and empowers everything. We are called to, fashioned for, drawn towards, knowingly or not, an infinite destiny.

‘In each baby is a vital spark, and this urge towards life and growth and development is a part of the baby, something the baby is born with, and which is carried forward in a way we do not have to understand,’ says Winnicott, who is maybe urging the mother to leave room for God in the baby’s life, to allow a space for the baby just to ‘be’ – a space where the baby ultimately develops a sense of the separate ‘self’. To be grounded in the ‘hidden self’ is, in a way, to be grounded in God. Maybe God is at one and the same time both the space and the spark and the self. But never the worry . . .

Our lack of self-belief leaves its mark on our minds, souls and bodies. Internalised self-doubt eventually affects our health . . . We no longer sense that Presence within – from which all true beauty shines. Without a healthy sense of self we project our unhappiness outwards. As our harsh treatment of ourselves sets in, so does our dismissiveness and cynicism about others. We begin to see the world through the filter of our own complexes. I remember an evening of impromptu entertainment in a former parish. Someone was needed to play the piano. When an unlikely looking, rather portly volunteer ambled towards the gap-toothed keyboard on a makeshift stage there were some doubtful, if not judgemental, expressions and comments from those around me. Let Anna Wigley’s ‘The Jazz Pianist’ describe what happened next:

Before he sits at the keys he seems  
short-breathed with bulk:  
his belly a whale, his arms fat fish  
that struggle to hang straight.  
He takes the slender stool between his legs  
and perches; a buffalo on a shooting stick.  
The hands come up and rest  
over the keys in dainty readiness.  
Then he pulls from the piano’s throat  
With such a deft, exquisite touch  
brilliant scarves; and we stare  
as if the room were full of strange weather.

(Unmasking God pp 86,87,88)