

## Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 25th 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 The Energy called God: the Evolution called the Holy Spirit is an unpublished paper of mine, offered in six parts .Part 5 this week.(Spring 2018.) *Daniel O'Leary*

### 5.One Story – Countless Tellings

When the unfolding of life itself at all levels of being is understood as the unfolding of the incarnate mystery we call God, then many of the 'certainties' and boundaries of our faith are radically shaken. As our perennial dualistic indoctrination rapidly recedes under the holistic vision of a common intimacy and immediacy between Creation and Creator, our way of perceiving our earth, our universe and cosmos, is profoundly transformed. Set free from the limitation of blinkered dogma (as Pope Francis put it), the edges of the sacred are vastly, infinitely extended. Now, we no longer draw lines between where God is present and from where God is absent, between communities we call holy and those we label as secular. We begin to understand more clearly something of the vision of Teilhard de Chardin when he declared that 'the life of everyone and everything is "adorable"'. Sensitised to the shadow of God over everything, we no longer build barriers to protect the bits of the world, or those human groups that we decide are 'more' spiritual. Wherever life is, God is. We learn to respect the present infinite in all people, in all things. Have we enough free and open wisdom within us to consider the fact that God may well be delighted, and indeed may have willed from all ages, to be worshiped in the shape and form of all the world religions that endeavour to be true to the holy insights nurtured by virtue of their own native beliefs and inherited understanding. (Thomas Merton calls these the 'higher religions presenting the one truth according to their own traditions and lights'.) There is the one story – and many expressions of it.

Bede Griffiths wrote of a melting-pot of the different religious traditions at the deepest levels of their mystical experience of God. This experience is not a knowing about God (as in much Christian practice) but an experience of the reality of God in the depths of the soul. There is one Divine Reality and an infinite number of incarnations, expressions and experiences of that enduring Love. In the Bhagavad Gita, for example we find 'My true being is unborn and changeless. I am the Lord who lives in every creature. I manifest myself in finite forms.' And again, in the Chandogya Upanishad, 'In the beginning was only Being. Out of himself he brought forth the cosmos and entered into everything . . . Of everything he is the inmost Self.' Now read John 1:1, 3, 14 and notice the sublime similarities, and then the added force of the Incarnation revelation 'And the Word became flesh and dwells among us.' We will struggle at times with these insights. Where is God in those who set out to destroy all goodness, beauty and truth? Where is God in a postmodern society that deliberately wishes to survive and thrive precisely through the exclusion of all traces of the divine from its midst? How can we ever locate God in the minds of those committed to pursuing the bitter genocides that have all the hallmarks of utter evil? How can our vision of a God whose incarnate presence is the lived life of everyone and everything, corrupt and sublime, guide us forward?