

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 13th January –

Paint on a Broader Canvas

My friend John was confiding in me only last week about the morning he felt quite depressed over his domestic circumstances. Like the familiar cloud, his negativity was hanging heavily over him as he set out walking to his office. As he lifted his head he noticed how busy the sidewalks were with so many people going hither and the thither with all sorts of expressions on their faces. 'I am just one of the many,' he suddenly and gratefully thought, 'I'm just one of the human race. This is what it's like to be alive. Good days, not-so-good days. Just like everyone else. Why do I expect to be the exception? Why do I expect to be happy every day? I'm no different from anyone else. It's called life.' I, too, find that kind of thinking immensely liberating. It might at first seem like cold comfort, but the tremendous built-in realism never fails to restore some kind of balance to my moods.

There is an astonishing shift in our attitude to our own work, both inner and outer, when we begin to see it against that infinite horizon, and to our own suffering when we begin to believe in its infinite value for the healing of our sisters and brothers, and of the whole earth, as we fill out and fill in, all that's still incomplete, as St Paul puts it, in the work of Jesus Christ. No stranger to pain herself, Sheila Cassidy is familiar with this insight:

I believe no pain is lost.

The bloodshed in Salvador
will irrigate the heart of some
financier a thousand miles away.
the terror, pain, despair, swamped
by lava, flood or earthquake
will be caught up like mist
to fall again a gentle rain
on arid heart or souls despairing
In the back streets of Brooklyn.

There is one last elusive insight I want to mention briefly here. It has something to do with the way that all of life, non-human and human, human and divine, created and incarnated, ordinary and mysterious, are all played out, lived through, and personally experienced in each one's life, though mostly unconsciously. This weekly reflection is about painting on a broader canvas, about seeing our lives against an infinite horizon, about reverencing the sheer mystery and amazement and wonder of our own being, and that of all creation,

(Travelling Light pages 55 , 58)