

In 'New Hearts for New Models', Daniel uses images to help us understand the kind of priestly service needed in our time. Each of us is called, through baptism, to be priest, prophet and servant-king to one another. Although written primarily for priests, hopefully these images will help us all.

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 14th March

Priest as Prophet of Beauty

There once was a sculptor working hard with his hammer and chisel on a large block of marble. A little boy who was watching him saw nothing more than large and small pieces of stone falling away left and right. He had no idea what was happening. But when the boy returned to the studio a few weeks later, he saw, to his great surprise, a large, powerful lion sitting in the place where the marble block had stood. With much excitement the boy ran to the sculptor and asked, 'Sir, tell me, how did you know that there was a beautiful lion in the marble?'

We all carry a beautiful lion within us. Most of us are unaware of the lion's presence because no one told us he was there, and anyway he is asleep. One of the tasks of the priest is to remind us of the precious image inside us. This work is 'the ministry of beauty'. Made as we are in God's image, the priest asks why, in spite of the perennial distortion of that image, we are all not daily delighted at the wonderful creation we carry in our hearts. He asks why we are not moved by our own inner splendour, by the bright divinity that makes us sons and daughters of God. There is a deep joy in revealing to people their own beauty, in discovering for them their royal lineages. It is difficult to imagine a more delightful work. . . .

The priest is dedicated to revealing to people the angel they unknowingly carrying within. Irenaeus was talking about beauty when he said that 'the glory of God was the fully alive human being'. So was Saint Paul when he reminded us that 'our unveiled faces reflect like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, growing brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image that we reflect.'(2 Corinthians 3 : 18)And in the most wonderful words, Thomas Aquinas assures us that, 'God is beauty itself, beautifying all things. God puts into creatures, along with a kind of sheen, a reflection of God's own luminous ray, which is the fountain of all light.'(De DivinisNominibus , n.340) We are born for beauty. We hunger for it all our lives. It nourishes us; It delights us; it fills us with good energy. And above all it is such a healing thing.

In its most profound meaning the priest believes that it is only beauty that will save the world. He is aware of the urgent need to recover our lost sense of this necessary grace. We are well tutored in the virtues of goodness and truth. But without their sister, beauty, that blessed trinity remains unbalanced. Today our parishioners are held to ransom by a counterfeit attraction, intensely and relentlessly imprinted into our subconscious minds, and beguiling the souls of young and old. Our preaching of the beautiful Word will help people discern the false from the true, empowering them with the knowledge of their own creativity, their dignity and their glory. We all sorely need to be reminded about how pleased God is

with us, how good we are, how extravagantly precious we are in God's eyes. We need to be told each Sunday about how beautiful we are - our hands for healing, our eyes for smiling, our words for redeeming, our bodies for loving, our hearts for intimacy, our souls for vision.

As the priest explores with his people the mystery of the incarnation and the wider meaning of the Eucharistic celebration, a sense of utter wonder overwhelms the human heart and mind. God was delighted to become a human being and to stay intimately involved with humanity in bread and wine. And within each of us is the capacity to bring God forth as Mary and Jesus did. Our bodies, too, are temples of the Holy Spirit. This makes them beautiful beyond compare, to be revered and cherished. The task of the priest is to convince the people of God that this is so. They carry within them God's dream. We empower each other to make that dream a reality. . . .

We are not called to be superman or wonder-woman, to be ever-perfect, to be always sinless: we are called to be faithful. Neither are we called to do extraordinary things in extraordinary ways, but to do the little things well. This is what Mother Teresa meant when she spoke about doing 'something beautiful for God' each day. If beauty, then, has something to do with a never-ending sequence of small beginnings, if it is 'the product of honest attention to the particular' then we have many small epiphanies of beauty in the daily life of our parishes.

([New Hearts for New Models](#), pp 44-50)

