

Daniel's Reflection for week beginning 11th June Recognising and Nurturing our Origins

There is a sense in which we can set the beginnings of creation into the context of our own long-term infancy. These days, we are perennially searching for our ancestral roots. We have a need to seek out and recognise our origins. It has to do with a desire to belong, to be at home within our extended family, within our planet earth, within our universe and ultimately within God. Albert Einstein is often quoted as identifying the most important question for each human being - 'Is the universe we inhabit a friendly place or not?' The response will significantly determine the shape of our lives and the degree of satisfaction and joy that we experience. Were we destined from all time to be created from primeval parents or did we happen by accident, or through a later intervention by God? Freeman Dyson, a contemporary physicist, suggests an answer. 'It almost seems,' he writes, 'As if the universe must in some sense have known that we were coming.' The theologian's reasons for putting this sentiment in much more comfortable terms are easy to find today

Faith affirms that we have been addressed by a Word of promise that uncovers the meaning not only of our individual lives and our whole history, but of the entire universe. Even though the Word breaks out into the daylight of consciousness with the birth of persons and human history, faith allows us to discern a great promise even in the earliest moment of the cosmic adventure. When we are convinced by faith and science of the bonding between our own lives, humanity as a whole, and the known and unknown realms of space, only then are we ready for the 'ecological conversion' that Pope Francis emphasises in his *Laudato Si*. This change of heart is inevitable once we recognise the intimacy of long infancy over billions of years with God's grand design for the future of creation. And this original vision of God, this divinely implanted seed of care and compassion then gives rise to maternal and relentless impulse to protect and transform all of life because, in the end, it is ourselves we are taking care of.

For a long time, a question about two disconnected aspects of the mystery of our faith has occupied my mind. I often wondered at the strange space between our picture of a God of the churches and that of the God of creation. The one seem to me so full of a sense of loss, of guilt and of homelessness. As exiles we do not really belong here. We are strangers in a foreign land, pining for our true home in heaven. The other picture is a vibrant one of God's delight in this world, of creativity, diversity, excitement and wild, divine extravagance. The world is God's beloved body and we ourselves are the very temples and home of God. How could I reconcile these seemingly opposite pictures of creation and incarnation as handed down to me by the same Christian tradition? . . .

Karl Rahner, in his theological and spiritual writings, was the first visionary to put the pieces together for me. He set out to recover a traditional and forgotten understanding of sacramentality. He clarified the notion of Jesus as sacrament. Jesus is the sacrament, not just of the chosen people, not just of all humanity, but also of the whole world and of all creation. The 'line of promise' running through the stories and prophecies of the Hebrew scriptures have resonances of universal implications.

In the traditional teaching about the hypostatic union in the one person of Jesus, we find the unique and irrevocable meeting between creation's graced openness to divine fulfilment of God's creative and loving desire to achieve the same intimacy. In Christ was completed and perfected the first longing of creation for God and God's own desire to fulfil that longing by becoming eternally united with humanity and creation. In Christ, the listening ear of a groaning and straining creation heard the divine music that it was coded to hear from the beginning - the unceasingly uttered Word of a self-surrendering God. Christ revealed, onefor-all, and in his own human self, the 'hidden agenda' of God's initial creation, by being at once 'the way forward' for the final and unrepeatable breakthrough of that creation into God, and, at the same time, by being 'the way in' for the ever-approaching, self-disposing divine emptying of God into the world that God had first conceived out of love