

3. Week Beginning 16th November 2014 - The Astonishing Revelation of Incarnation

What I'm trying to clarify and identify here, is the locus or address of the truest reality of the human spirit. Having explored that, I'm then trying to emphasise that here, too, is the holiest and most authentic experience of the divine. A fully-fleshed and full-blooded theology of incarnation, unique among all other religious traditions of revelation, contains the almost incredible truth that here, and here only, and for us humans, is the only way of experiencing God. It is becoming more obvious from recent theological writings about the original Christian vision of incarnation, together with a trust in the teachings about 'developing doctrine', that a whole forgotten model of traditional sacramental theology is waiting to be rediscovered and explored.

Karl Rahner reminds us again and again that there is no event in which we cannot experience God. There is nothing in life so secular or sinful that we cannot find God in it. It means that we live in a very ambiguous world, which is, in fact, permeated by grace. The Eucharist is not a refuge from a trivial or commonplace world. We should never treat it as an escape from the emptiness and meaninglessness of our lives. God is in the most commonplace events, happenings and experiences of each day, even the ones that seem furthest from heaven. To believe this is an immense challenge. Why would God want to be present to such 'ordinary' moments? But if we have the courage and patience to look, we may be surprised to find a God more beautiful and loving than we dared to dream of.

According to Rahner, each moment of our lives is like a grain of sand lying just alongside the ocean of mystery. Every event, no matter how profane or mundane it might seem, is a potential experience of God. In fact, the experience of God does not normally take place in religious ways and at sacred times, but in the material of the failures, difficulties, responsibility, fidelity, forgiveness of the human condition. Michael Skelley in *The Liturgy of the World: Karl Rahner's Theology of Worship* writes, 'The explicitly religious moments of our lives, experiences of the church's liturgy, for example, are necessary and important symbolic manifestations of the presence of God in all our moments. But they are just that; they are not the only times that God is present. We will be only able to recognise the presence of the absolute mystery in the liturgy if we first recognise its abiding presence throughout our whole lives and in all the world.'

After the resurrection, in the powerful experience of fellowship and community, the disciples indeed realised that Jesus, surrounded by sinners and outcasts, had given to the breaking of bread a new and universal meaning – not just in terms of the Passover meal, but in relation to all meals and encounters between people, from the innocent child's shared midday apple to the executive's more ambiguous banquet, wherever in fact reconciliation and trust and hope for the future are happening. Since the Paschal mystery is really present in every attempt to relate and reconcile what is broken, to recover and discover the energy of love, to create and to grow in trust, then the human predicament itself is the central dynamism for the specifically ecclesial celebration of Eucharist . . .

The pattern of a true and loving humanity revealed in Jesus, is the only paradigm for our actions and attitudes. Because Jesus lived a human life, thought with a human mind, loved with a human heart and was tempted in his human condition, nothing, apart from deliberate, persistent and unrepentant destruction of love, is other than the raw material of the Eucharist.

(*Treasured and Transformed* pp182,183,184)