

## Season of Soul (Part 2) Week Beginning April 27th 2014

The mystics offer us two inseparable signposts along the way of the soul – the vision of divine immanence, and the working out of it in practice. But how do we do this? How do we hold the sublime vision and the menial tactics together? The answer is hidden in the shocking revelation of incarnation – a kind of anticlimax we still mostly find unacceptable.

It is only in the loving vision and awareness we bring to whatever we do, the compassionate mindfulness that we infuse into the most mundane realities of our days, that the secret of the searching soul is revealed. And our work could then be described as love made visible. When we sense the gold in the rubble of our lives, when we divine ‘the dearest freshness deep down things’ then we are living in the way of incarnation. and this changes everything. our hearts begin to open, our eyes to shine, we breathe more easily, we face the dark confidently.

In his *Le Milieu Divin* Teilhard de Chardin situates this transforming awareness in the ability to see our ordinary lives against the backdrop of a divine horizon: ‘We serve to complete [the creation], even by the humblest work of our hands ... With each one of our works, we labor, separately, but no less really, to build the Pleroma; that is, we bring to Christ a little completion ... There is a sense in which he is at the tip of my pen, my spade, my brush, my needle – of my heart and of my mind. By pressing the stroke, the line, or the stitch, on which I am engaged, to its ultimate natural finish, I shall lay hold of this last end toward which my innermost will tends.’ De Chardin goes on to say that knowledge is not enough. Love is the most powerful, the most unknown energy in the world.

It is also in the context of incarnate love that Fr Pedro Arrupe, former father general of the Jesuits, outlines his agenda for soulwork. His words would be a fitting summary of Michael Haneke’s *Amour*. ‘Nothing is more practical in finding god than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, what you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.’ Mystic and philosopher John Moriarty’s much-cherished words offer a comforting mantra for nourishing the *unum necessarium*, the essential focus of the soul:

*Clear mornings bring the mountains to my doorstep.  
Calm nights give the rivers their say.  
Some evenings the wind puts its hand on my shoulder.  
I stop thinking.  
I leave what I’m doing and I go the soul’s way.*

(from ‘*Treasured and Transformed*’, published March 2014)